

# RESONANCE

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## The Sampler on Trial

**Bob Ostertag**

"Why computer music sucks"

**Tim Hodgkinson**

"Sampling, Power and real collisions"

Interviews with

**DJ Spooky**

**David Shea**

**Martin Tétréault**

**Richard Barrett**

**FREE**

**CD**

## The Sampler on Trial!

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### Free CD

#### Resonance 5.1 CD track information

1. **David Shea** - Trio for samplers II & III (4:04)  
David Shea: sampler. Recorded 23/2/96 at Conway Hall, London as part of LMC's New Aura series.
2. **Stock, Hausen and Walkman** - Sleep (4:06)  
Stock, Hausen & Walkman: samplers, electronics, &c.
3. **Sainkho and Otomo Yoshihide** - improvisation (12:00)  
Sainkho Namchylak: voice; Otomo Yoshihide: turntables, CD player, Mini-disc player, guitar, &c. Recorded 12/5/96 at ICA, London as part of LMC's 5th Anniversary Series.
4. **Martin Tétréault** - Je suis à Londres (4:38)  
Martin Tétréault: modified turntables. Recorded 8/3/96 at Conway Hall, London as part of LMC's New Aura series.
5. **Richard Barrett and Mary Oliver** - improvisation (3:41)  
Richard Barrett: sampler; Mary Oliver: violin. Recorded 27/5/96 at Conway Hall, London as part of LMC's 5th Annual Festival of Experimental Music.
6. **Bob Ostertag and Phil Minton** - improvisation (4:06)  
Bob Ostertag: sampler; Phil Minton, voice. Recorded 8/9/96 at ICA, London as part of LMC's 15th Anniversary Series.
7. **Habaio** on Hirima (Bamboo Susharp or Jew's Harp) (1:55)  
Recorded 25/6/76 in Sounura Village, Eastern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea.
8. **Konaka and Tibong** on Waudang Flutes plus six singers and four gamuts (wooden slit gong) players (12:23)  
Recorded 19/5/76 in Bo'da Village, Manam Island, Madang Province, Papua New Guinea.
9. **Roger Smith** - Another Unexpected Turn (2:57)  
Roger Smith: acoustic guitar. Recorded 22/12/95 in Finchley, London by Ian Vickers.
10. **Stock, Hausen and Walkman** - Samples (7:16)  
All sounds kidnapped & mistreated by Stock, Hausen and Walkman.

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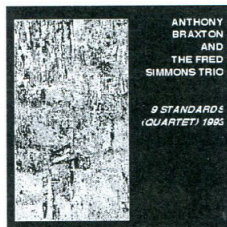
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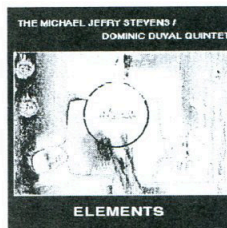
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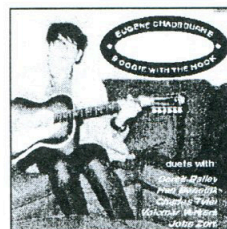
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# Editorial

Samplers, along with other electronic technology, have been responsible for music's retreat into the bedroom: headphone music made by people who have set up makeshift studios in their living space. If this is a crude characterisation, it is nevertheless a truism that live music, created in real time and existing in a social space, is often perceived as being on the wane. As **Bob Ostertag** outlines in the piece which opens this issue, a parallel development to the 'bedroom phenomena' has been taking place largely inside the walls of Academia: a stylised notion of computer music has developed that has little apparent communicable value.

In the bulk of this issue of *Resonance* we focus on practitioners who have, in contrast, tackled the issue of using sampling technology in live performance head on. **Tim Hodgkinson** argues passionately and precisely in his pivotal essay that there are many problems in the democratic combination of acoustic instruments and samplers in the creation of spontaneous music. Is the response time of the instrument sufficiently instantaneous? What about all the baggage of musics past that is deployed? Tim's piece acts as a bridge between our earlier critical explorations of progress in musical form (it began life as a response to Chris Cutler's *History of Plunderphonics* a couple of issues back) and the various positions expressed by musicians finding themselves at the edges of sonic exploration — performers who use technologies both old and new to deploy sound readymades to a variety of ends: the turntable orchestrations of *bricoleur* **Martin Tétréault**; **Richard Barrett's** grand sense of architecture; David Shea's cross-cultural hybrids; **Bob Ostertag's** *Say No More* group that alternates between the real and the virtual; and **Marie Goyette's** theatrical street installations.

These performers uncover paradoxes and problematics in their multiple approaches to the question, *Why samplers?* Such paradoxes, and the vertiginous entropy they imply, are characteristic of the present — of the late postmodernism embodied in the figure of Paul Miller, aka **DJ Spooky**. In his role as a theorist he views postmodernism as a focal tool for understanding of distinct cultures; but he also perceives his generation as existing in a media vacuum where any interest in history, precedent and tradition is negligible and where the individual appears to be losing any sense of power or responsibility.

More fundamentally problematic, perhaps, is the ethical dilemma which **Ragnar Johnson**, an ethnomusicologist, uncovers in his memoir of field-recordings. Tape technology has had an irreversible and profound impact upon all civilisations in the twentieth century, at once preserving the sounds of vanishing communities and erasing the lived meaning of those sounds. With many indigenous musics in decline, what are we to make of idealisations of interconnectedness? or of the straightforward abuse of music which has inevitably entered our public domain? Are we learning from and helping to preserve the most valuable aspects of different cultures in this global dialogue? or are we seduced simply by surface and the speed with which we can pass from meaning to meaning? And are we even aware of our own traditions?

The last issue of *Resonance* came with a seven-inch single. This issue, for the first time we are happy to present concrete audio examples illustrative of or complementary to the magazine's written content in the form of a CD. We hope to retain this magazine with full CD format over the coming years.

*Contributors' guidelines:* Resonance is unable to pay contributors and is produced by volunteers. We welcome writing about any aspect of contemporary music. We can only return unsolicited material if it is accompanied by sae or irc. If in doubt, do phone or fax us before posting anything. Full writers' guidelines are available on request. Proposals for guest editorials and themes for issues are also encouraged, especially if you have a particular area of knowledge or enthusiasm that you feel is worth coverage and which fits into our brief. The next issue of Resonance, due Spring 1997, will be devoted to Radio in all its guises.

# Why Computer Music Stucks

Bob Ostertag *was invited onto the panel for the*

*judging of this year's prestigious Ars Electronica Computer Music Prize. After listening to the 287 submissions, he came to some sobering conclusions. Here he outlines the reasons why he thinks Computer Music has reached a dead end.*

'Computer Music' *per se* is, at least for the moment, at something of a dead end. This is the result of a bizarre sort of inverse development over the last few decades.

Back in the 'old days,' the electronic technology used in music was quite primitive, yet the range of music that was attempted was staggering, and a freewheeling spirit of adventure was prevalent. Today, we have computers with technical capabilities inconceivable at the time of Varese and the early works of Cage and Stockhausen. Yet as the technical capabilities have expanded, the range of musical possibilities which are being explored has become increasingly restricted. Similarly, in the 'old days' access to the electronic music-making technology was limited to a handful of individuals working in a few research institutions. Today, computers are ubiquitous in music. There is almost no recorded music that does not involve the use of a computer somehow or other, and the ever decreasing cost of the technology means that a *bona fide* home computer music studio is within the means of any member of the middle class of the western world.

Why this contradictory evolution, which seems to impose social restrictions as fast as technology seems to offer new freedom? Why this emergence of Computer Music, instead of an openness to all the musics which computers make possible?

There are two reasons: one has to do with artistic stasis, the other to do with social self-interest.

1. Artistic Stasis. For all the self-professed interest in using digital technology to create new musical forms, in fact the agenda of Computer Music quickly ossified around the concerns of the Western avant garde prevalent at the time of the introduction of computers into music (in fact, concerns which pre-dated the appearance of the computer in music): namely, algorithmic composition (which is really a digital extension of serial music), and extended timbral exploration.

When considering the 287 works submitted for the *Ars Electronica* prize this year, it is remarkable how little the focus of Computer Music has strayed from these early concerns over the intervening decades. This is even more apparent when one considers that,

2. Social Self-Interest. The emergence of Computer Music as a thing we isolate to consider on its own, to confer advanced academic degrees in, publish journals and organize conferences about, and award prizes to, is of course intimately linked to the careers, salaries, and prestige of the individuals and institutions which benefit. Here the logic of the inverse development of the broadening use of computers in music against the narrowing of the concerns of Computer Music at least has a clear and rational basis in the self-interest of those involved. In fact, it is a phenomenon seen time and time again in academia: the more an area of knowledge becomes diffused in the public, the louder become the claims of those within the tower to exclusive expertise in the field, and the narrower become the criteria for determining who the 'experts' actually are.

The cul-de-sac these trends have led Computer Music into is a considerably less enjoyable place to tarry due to a technological barrier that is becoming increasingly obvious: despite the vastly increased power of the technology involved, the timbral sophistication of the most cutting edge technology is not significantly greater than that of the most mundane and commonplace systems. In fact, after listening to the 287 pieces submitted to *Ars Electronica*, I would venture to say that the pieces created with today's cutting edge technology (spectral resynthesis, sophisticated phase vocoding schemes, and so on) have an even greater uniformity of sound among them than the pieces done on MIDI modules available in any music store serving the popular music market. This fact was highlighted during the jury session when it was discovered that a piece whose timbral novelty was noted by the jury as being exceptional was discovered to have been created largely with old Buchla analogue gear.

The problem of greater technological power failing to produce more interesting timbral results would not be so central were it not for the fact discussed above, that Computer Music has made timbral exploration its central concern. To put the matter in its bluntest form, it appears that *the more technology is thrown at the problem, the more boring the results*. People set out

The **more** Technology  
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the **results**

Yet just as computers' presence in music has mushroomed from nearly invisible to downright unavoidable, the range of music considered to be 'Computer Music' has become increasingly fixed and rigid.

formally speaking, the large majority of pieces involving computer response to live instrumentalist are simply variations in algorithmic composition (though the influence of the increased interest in improvisation which has recently spread through the Western avant garde is also a factor, at least in some cases).

for new timbral horizons, get lost along the way in the writing of the code, the trouble-shooting of the systems, and the funding to make the whole thing possible, then fail to notice that the results do not justify the effort.

It is interesting to note that the jury for computer animation found an opposite result: in animation at least, the difference in quality between work done with cutting edge versus commonplace technology is immediately apparent to even the untrained observer. Even, in fact, to an 8-year old. Thus the success of *Toy Story* (winner of this year's Computer Animation prize). In Computer Music, on the other hand, the merits of the works done with cutting edge versus commonplace technology are certainly opaque to the uninitiated, and often discernible only to those who have invested time and effort in acquiring expertise in the very same technology. (It must be said, however, that due to the enormous financial returns which hinge on visual innovation, the resources thrown at computer animation dwarf those involved in even the most high end music systems. Who knows what might result if the resources put into developing the two hours of *Toy Story* animation were put into two hours of music?)

If, however, we leave the confines of the Computer Music tower and look at what is happening outside in the rest of world, what do we see? Computers are revolutionizing the way music is made. Take dance club music, for example - techno, hip-hop, trip-hop, trance, etc. Here we have genre upon sub-genre upon micro-genre of music which is based almost entirely upon, and impossible to conceive of without, the absolute regularity of tempo computers are capable of producing. But this development is not limited to music with the regularity of beat of those I just mentioned. The funkiness of almost every groove on every Prince record would not have been possible without the timing resolution offered by computers. Or to go to a different extreme, the drum machine extravaganzas of Ikue Mori, with their almost absurdly complex tempo and meter juxtapositions, usually determined on the fly, are unthinkable without computers.

To take yet another development: automated mixing consoles and effects processors have brought a sea change in the subtlety and nuance possible in the mixing of popular music, as immediately becomes apparent upon comparing recordings made before and after their emergence. This has opened up a whole new range of studio artistry.

All these developments and more are cases in which the introduction of computers has revolutionized the way music is conceived, played, recorded, and appreciated, creating new genres, new fields of expertise, new forms of experiencing a performance, and so on. All of it is unimaginable without computers. *And none of it is Computer Music.*

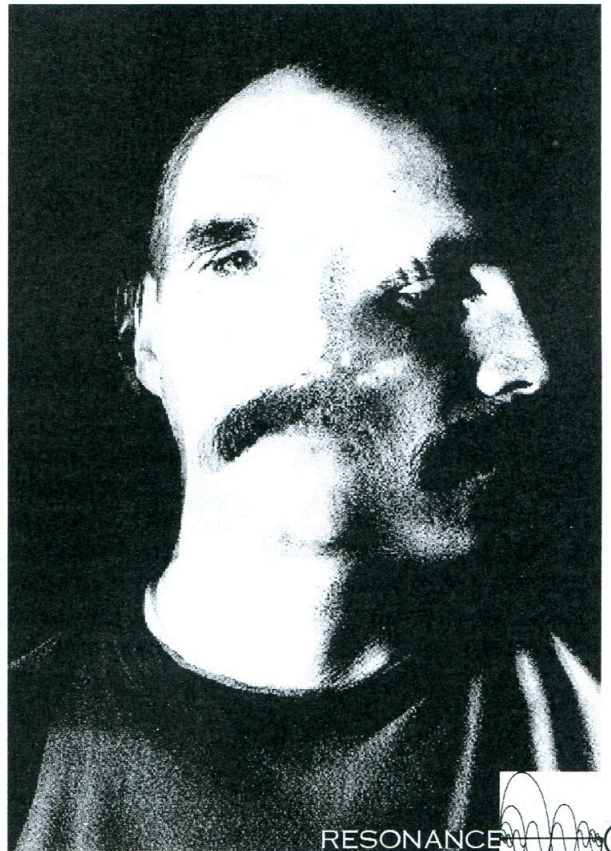
So far we have not even added sampling into the discussion. Of all the ways that computers have been applied to music, sampling has had the most radical impact. Sampling has taken *musique concrete*, blown it open, and showered the debris down on the entire musical world. New genres have been spawned and existing ones changed forever. New terrains of collaboration and appropriation have been opened. Even more profoundly, fundamental notions of authorship and artistic ownership have been shattered, leaving for the moment no clear heir in their place.

It may not even be an exaggeration to say that the entire 'post-modern' aesthetic has been shaped in important ways by this technology. Yet sampling is not Computer Music. Why? Precisely because sampling is everywhere. If sampling is the legitimate domain of any teenager working on the family Macintosh, no one can claim a monopoly on its knowledge. Thus it falls from the rarefied heights of Computer Music, its vast impact and consequences notwithstanding.

I wish to be very clear here: I am not arguing that the market in which popular music is bought and sold is a valid arbiter of artistic excellence. As a composer who has worked for years with no institutional connection or support, surviving on the fringes of the music market, I am acutely aware of how the market imposes its own constraints, and discourages the kinds of creativity that interest me the most. It is the weight of these very market constraints that make it so important that those musical arenas which operate according to non-market criteria be as open and flexible as possible. The very existence of all those kids goofing around with sampling on the family Macintosh has helped to stir an interest in novel musical approaches in general and music made with computers in particular - an interest that is broader than ever.

Isn't it ironic? On the one hand we find market constraints squeezing popular music with an unprecedented vigour, and on the other hand we have a public with an equally unprecedented fascination with computers and their possibilities. And yet Computer Music can find no audience beyond those who make it.

*This article was first published in Prix Ars Electronica 1996. Thanks to Ars Electronica and Bob Ostertag for permission to reprint it here.*



# Sampling, Power and Real Collisions

*TIM HODGKINSON is a composer and performer on keyboards and reed instruments. In this essay he tackles head-on the aesthetic dilemmas posed by new musical technology — is the sampler a performance instrument? Who designs these machines? And what are the hidden cultural and political implications of an aesthetic of appropriation?*

## THE ARGUMENT BETWEEN REED AND PIPE

Begin at the other end. Begin with the physics of sound, the old ear and the old physics. Play a clarinet: tongue stopping the reed briefly, lungs pushing up air pressure this side of it, then the tongue's sudden flip downwards off the reed releases a burst of energy, and the reed crash-starts into motion. Held by ligatures, the reed moves only vertically. Restoring forces would simply return this disturbed object to its former restful state, but the reed's inertia first delays this return, then exaggerates it. Elastic, the reed bends backwards and forwards, passing repeatedly through its equilibrium point, vibrating with constant frequency and decreasing amplitude. Attached however, it communicates its disturbance to the pipe of the clarinet, an almost one-dimensional cavity that itself begins to resonate and to pass its own vibration back to the reed.

This is an *acoustic system at work* — an assemblage of interacting vibrating parts which produce an output total vibration. Any such system will have characteristic behaviours shaped by the interplay of restoring forces, inertias, and the disturbances that elicit them. Some of these behaviours are sequential. So, in the example above, an argument develops between reed and pipe before the compromise steady-state perceived as a note is reached. This argument is the transient behaviour of the system. Other behaviours are non-sequential; they are modes of behaviour between which the system chooses, or jumps. Musically, the most important of these are the harmonic modes of vibration, but other candidates include the varied behaviour of reeds, with *strong* blowing causing temporary closure of the aperture, and *weak* not.

Consider too that many of the most controllable sources of vibration, such as plucked or bowed strings, are too weak to produce sounds other than of extreme intimacy. Acoustic amplification being more efficient at narrow frequency bands, different resonators, or modes of resonance, may be used to cover different regions of the frequency spectrum. Typically, nodal points in the system's behaviour will occur as it jumps from one resonator to another.

In short, the acoustic systems that we use in music tend to be complex, combining different materials and structures with varied and discontinuous behaviours. The points at which these systems swing from one mode to another are hard to control because tiny movements produce relatively massive differences and the proportionality of movement to result breaks down. Because traditional musics favour stable timbre and melodic control, they have not exploited all the physical potentials of acoustic systems. Certain behaviours are censored. Audible changes in mode, and unstable phenomena such as 'wolf tones' in violins, are shunned, demonised.

## UNSTABLE BUT ALERT

Take away this cultural censorship, and a world of rich, complex, but relatively unstable and hard-to-control timbre possibilities opens up. The substance of free improvisation as an aesthetic practice distinct from previous musics consists precisely in its openness to transient, effectively accidental, detail that would be occluded from expectations and responses in those musics, and in its willingness to unlock the mutual incoherence of the sub-elements of acoustic systems as a

source of interesting sound. So there is an underlying convergence between the potentials of unstable physical systems and the aesthetic project of openness.

Not that free improvisation is about abandon: on the contrary, players strive to register the consequences of the instabilities they've unlocked. Free improvisation is the synthesis of receiving the detail — including that which would be excluded were conventional frame consistency and stability to be insisted on — and giving the response, the movement towards a musical contextualisation of the detail, to be temporarily sustained or in turn immediately challenged. This produces the unique reception identity and even psycho-rhythmic identity of player and audience, a state of shared alertness within variable or uncertain frames. And this makes free improvisation quintessentially a performance music, with all that that implies about the specifics of the psycho-physiological activity, social occasion, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

This description, though incomplete, will serve to show that free improvisation has an identity as a specific practice, emerging at a particular time and for particular reasons. I reserve the term "aesthetic" for everything that is germane to the demands of this and of other such determined practices, not to attempt a definition of aesthetics, but to hint at what it is that we must not allow the reduction of, when we bring them into relation with such quite other complexes as technologies or discourses. I will argue here that, amongst the aesthetic requirements of free improvisation, are matters of control and of limit; that there are currents of use of new technologies that are associated

with slackness of control and with inadequate limitation of material; and finally that these losses are often legitimated by references to discourses of power.

## TECHNOLOGY AND CONTROL

In practice, control and absence of control can be described as interwoven potentialities of technologies. Two interconnected processes happen in relation to new technologies; a process of positive valuation and application, and a process of psychological assimilation. Electronic amplification, for example, developed historically in response to an expansion in scale of intimate social events. This fundamental character of expanded intimacy is present in its capacity to transform singing styles, to open up microscopic, previously inaudible, sound-worlds, and so forth. Our psychological assimilation of amplified music makes it easy, nevertheless, to overlook the fact that difficulties of control in the application of simple electronic amplification to acoustic instruments are still sometimes unresolved in concerts today. The risks are: 1) loss of control of the player over the sound; 2) distortion of information returning to the player; and 3) divergence between what the player hears and what the audience hears.

Obviously the fact that an amplifier and loudspeaker have inherent characteristics is not a difficulty *per se*. However, where the sound level is such that the unamplified instrument is inaudible, the characteristics of the amplifier are disproportionately weighted. These would include: time delay, distortion of spectrum, compression of differences between variables, and so on. The fact that electronic amplification dispenses with mechanical linkage, and therefore physical proximity of system elements, creates the potential for blurring listeners' location of sound sources by both



direct and reflected sound within acoustic spaces. The importance attached to stereo placement in the production of recorded sound indicates the importance of source differentiation for the listeners' aesthetic appreciation.

Loss of source differentiation is even more likely with the use of secondary amplification, such as PA systems, which also greatly increases the potential disparity between what the musician hears and what the audience hears. It is still common today for the musician on stage to be palpably *not hearing* what is coming out front-of-house. The routine use of artificial reverbs, which, unlike reflections in actual space, are added to signals in a quantitative manner, can further compromise the use of acoustic space as a field of difference.

In short, amplification is liable to reduce the degree of tightness of control achievable by a musician. The interpolation of additional materials and processes between musician and audience risks a loss of musical energy, a loss of directness in the immediate communication of sound-detail. As listeners, our psychological assimilation of this energy loss represents a potential real loss in alertness to certain levels of musical detail, and in our capacity to appreciate fully musics which depend on it.

## GRABBING AND SQUINTING

Passing on to purely electronic instruments, is it useful to generalise on the basis of Glenn Gould's criteria for keyboard evaluation? As a concert pianist more interested in honing communication of musical structure than in the sensual quality of the sound, what Gould wanted from his pianos was maximum control, and he analysed this control into three strands:

1. Tactile grab and immediacy; an instrument should have a working minimum of delay in linkage, inertia, slackness of connection, elasticity of materials, and so on. *Movement* should be translated as immediately as possible into *sound*.

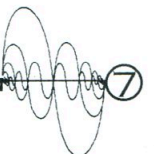
2. The instrument's response should be proportional and consistent to the player's action; information should return directly from the tactilities of the instrument.

3. The instrument should be easy to assimilate, demanding minimum attention *qua* instrument whilst being played.<sup>2</sup>

How does a set-up like *mother-keyboard-linked-to-sampler-fed-to-amp-and-speaker* match up to the Gould criteria? Well, tactility of keyboard can in theory be optimised because there is nothing beyond the keywork to have any necessary effect on its action. On proportionality, the sampler would *ab initio* score badly. There is, and by design, absolutely no necessary proportionality between the physical behaviour of the human-instrument interface and the specific sound produced. The third criterion — of ease of assimilation — does not fit well to this case. An instrument is obviously less assimilable if it demands different types of activity during performance, such as loading from disk, pressing pre-set select buttons, or squinting at tiny grey LCDs whilst turning data entry control knobs. But this is not unique to samplers. Orchestral percussionists use rest bars to silently retune drums for the next-but-one section, to lay out beaters, turn music, and so on. The difference is that in the latter case the psychology of switching between multiple types of activity is subsumed into the psychology of following a written part, and of having your time, activity, and (importantly) non-activity, determined for the duration of the piece.

## PERFORMABILITY

Can the sampler exempt itself from the Gould criteria by claiming to be not an instrument but an unlimited set of potential instruments? If so, are these potential instruments actually realisable? A sampler can be 'used' and 'operated', but can it be 'played'? As a machine for manipulating recorded sounds, a sampler must be prepared for performance, but does this process turn it into an instrument? Are tape-recorders and gramophones usefully described as musical instruments? What makes them so is *performability*; that is, what is done with, and to, the (in this





case) recorded material during performance; and further, how conducive the system is to the psychophysiology of live sound performance.

For a sampler, the question resolves into the following: to what extent can the programmer assign tight linkage between the most interesting potential behaviours of the system and the most precise human motor control and sensory monitoring?

This leads to the observation that in samplers the real-time interface is actually extremely narrow relative to the potential behaviours. The design is such that much of the creative work is in the programming which must take place prior to the performance; in this the sampler follows the same trajectory as the shift from analogue to digital synthesisers — a deleterious one for any music which calls for a public and audible dismemberment of sound.

## CRAWLING UNDER THE PIANO

Moreover, where use depends on a system of non-self-evident knowledge, it is more likely to be structured by the form in which that knowledge is presented. It becomes harder to impose agendas other than those implicated in design and its promise. A piano in a room makes a self-evident promise to any child. Sofia Gubaidulina has written about growing up in a room with a piano, crawling under it, singing into it, a vast world of resonant possibilities opening up. In contrast, a sampler's promise is hard to disentangle from its accompanying verbiage. Difficult to imagine a Thelonious Monk of the sampler, difficult to imagine any primal curiosity getting very far with it. And this verbiage, what does it say? The 200-odd page manual that comes with a sampler will tell you, for example, how to rectify looping problems caused by data corruption of the sample header file. The piano's equivalent would be not finger exercises but instructions on how to compensate for flacidity in bottom C# by tightening the fourth nut down on the sound-board by one and a half turns. Always a danger, then, that technical procedures substitute themselves for musical ones, that we

slip under the spell of an adolescent male fascination for boy-things, for self-contained zones of manipulation and consequence from which irreducible problems are simply excluded.

## SEALED FROM YOU

But around this layer of technical language floats, sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, the promise, the love affair, the gleam of your new machine. The promise is two-fold — Adaptivity (the moulding of the instrument to the individual's personality) and Power — though both of these may be thought of as facets of empowerment.

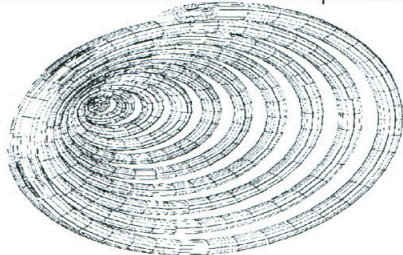
A sampler offers itself to be shaped by individual desire and, by the same token, to be part of the shaping of the individual. But this increase in adaptivity to the individual person (it does everything you want it to do) is obtained in exchange for a decrease in access to vital system elements. The box is sealed, so to speak, before it leaves the factory. In the sense that access to its working parts requires esoteric knowledge, it is sealed even before it leaves the design laboratory. This increasing remoteness of effective power and knowledge reflects a general characteristic of the current socio-technological tendency. The individual (and social) field of action shrinks as the interface with remote centralised systems is pushed further and further into it: an anti-democratic programme carried out in the name of enhanced individuation.

## USE ALL SOUND

Then, and equally integral to the sampler's design, comes the promise of power — first in the form of infinite sound possibilities, and then, hidden within this, the possibility of a vengeful mastery over cultural texts. The limits imposed by earlier technologies appear as obstacles that the new technology has jumped over. Investment of time and money in the new technology is justified precisely in order to overcome these limits. The point of a sampler is that it imposes no limit *qua* instrument on the sound it stores and emits. The point of using it is to use all

sound. The promise of the sampler and the responsibility of the performer contradict one another. Two mutually exclusive forms of power are implicated. Within aesthetic practice, performance is the means by which the performer's actual power is placed at the service of a hypothesis, a sequence of organized acts which are formally separated from having literal consequences in the real world. But performance can also be an exhibition of the actual power of the performer; this is counter-aesthetic because this display is an actual appeal for admiration or coded submission in the real world outside music. In the case of skill and effort subtle cultural arrangements may operate whereby the mastery of the player, whilst admired, is simultaneously understood as a submission to the dictates of the aesthetic project. In the case of limitless sound at the touch of a key, however, the performer risks being revealed as the agent of the technology, with the performance degenerating into a public ritual of submission to alienated social power.<sup>3</sup>

But let's imagine that the point is not to use *all* sound, but only *all sound that matters* — that our performer, in other words, is conjuring not so much with sound as with cultural texts. The after-hours activity of zapping between channels in hotel rooms is suddenly presentable as art, because something is being said with it, and if the performance seems a bit shapeless then that's because the something that is being said is that in fact nothing can be said, perhaps because the simultaneous diffusion of so many channels seems to subvert the significance of what is transmitted down any one of them. This is a far cry from *montage*, which, as Eisenstein described it, ruthlessly exposed the artist's basic intentional line at the cost of all ties to logical, natural or literary traditional pieties. Far from deploying a critical power against the structures of the information environment, our imaginary performer merely rehearses some of their consequences.



## IMPORTED DESIGN AGENDAS

I have said that free improvisation is a real-time musical practice requiring, in a specifically ludic sense, both control of detail and aesthetically adequate limitation of material. These demands have to be applied to new technologies coming into the improvisation field. Where they conflict with new technology design agenda, the conflict must, at the very least, be aesthetically registered.

My second assertion was that, where improvisation's priorities succumb to imported design agendas, aesthetic submission routinely looks to dis-courses of power for self legitimation. At this point an argument which has been perhaps artificially presented in the exclusive context of free improvisation necessarily broadens out, because no meaningful typology of music-technology discourses could restrict itself to their importance for this type of music alone. Therefore, I retrospectively add that the point of my claim that free improvisation is a specific practice implying specific constraints, is precisely that the equivalent thing could be said of *any other* identifiably distinct music, and that musics are not determined in any necessary way by factors from outside their own nature as practices. This is not to say that music is not famously vulnerable to the projection of discursive meanings, nor is it to say that it can or should purify itself of such meanings. Music will, however, by hook or by crook, aestheticise these meanings, that is, take them knowingly as a burden and submit them to an aesthetic context. (This description of an unavoidable choice between domination and submission rests on the observation that the cultural tension between music and discourse is such as to exclude the likelihood of discovering free-floating resources in the space between musical sound and discursive meaning.)

## ART AS SCIENCE

On what basis is a technical discourse normally imported into an aesthetic context today? The question can be linked historically to the development of modern forms of state funding for

**New technology is not sensed as technical but as the new state of mind sweeping away the old one. Music is not something to be performed but something to be put in place or set in motion.**

the arts. High art lacks the inbuilt legitimation of mass appeal and commercial success; it therefore needs an appropriate form of cultural legitimation. It seeks to present aesthetic activity as technical and scientific activity. In this way art acquires some of the necessary and objective value conferred on science. It becomes the acceptable reflection of an a-conflictual technocratic state. It elides with progress and promises an increasingly refined domination over nature.

The language surrounding and legitimating high art can be read as a kind of contract between two sections of the bourgeoisie - those who make directly financial and material profits and those who produce and maintain the cultural environment in which the market operates. It's a language haunted, then, by the need to convert itself into money. Despite the need for high art to distinguish itself in the strongest terms from commercial art, its linguistic hegemony goes far beyond its own boundaries. Major state-funded art institutions, such as IRCAM, are enormously influential in spreading the practice of routinely de-aestheticising musical decisions and procedures, and placing positive value on technical and impersonal results. IRCAM-type thinking deals with musical problems by asking whether the mathematical or cognitive structural model is correct, or simply banishes aesthetic questions to the low status category of subjective experience.<sup>4</sup>

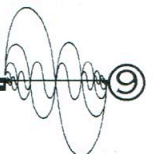
## STATE OF IMMERSION

Opposed to this high-art perspective comes a utopian one which sees the impact of new technology as anti-hierarchical. Hierarchy is here abstracted from its social basis and presented as a state of mind. New technology is not sensed as technical, in the sense of demanding skill or analytical understanding, but as the new state of mind sweeping away the old one. Music is

not something to be performed but something to be put in place or set in motion. Hence the point of new technology in music is that it allows a state of immersion in an autonomous process. Some allowance is made for the aesthetic responsibility for the immersee, but without transference of an actual means of response.

A more sophisticated perspective proposes that the aesthetic priority is always, in every case, actively to explore the potentials of the medium. In this view, musical practices are shaped by the material configuration which constitutes the medium. Indeed, the form of any practice is determined by the resistance of physical materials to human intentions. The impact of technological change is seen as over-riding aesthetic considerations, which have no value beyond their appropriateness to the earlier technology which shaped them. The urgent task is therefore to develop the new aesthetic appropriate to the new medium. However, in practice the emphasis is exclusively on the immanent potentials of the new medium, even if one can glimpse room for foreplay between what is immediately do-able and the broader promise. The shaping of these immanent potentials to a general historical character is a pre-emptive and selective act. It is argued, for example, that the existence of recording technology *per se* makes sound itself the proper matter of musical creation, when, in fact, digital memory is precisely and quintessentially the form of memory which is detached from any one sensory mode — allowing us, for example, to record a sequence on a computer just as easily as a sound on a sampler.

Essentially the rush to historicise the present, to think art in history-book chapter headings, serves to legitimate a demand for obedience to the spirit of the age.



## REPETITIVE BARRIER-BREAKING

Several characteristics of new technology in music are noted as constituent of a new aesthetic. Thus sampling proposes, as an inherent quality of the medium, intertextualisation, or 'leveling'; the breaking down of distinctions between different musics or between music and non-music. But, unless properly aestheticised, such a priority is likely to be of only marginal interest. To begin with, a barrier can only be broken down *once* before the point is made. Repetitive barrier-breaking suggests an excessive interest in re-programming audiences' perceptions, which has nothing to do with art. On the formal level the result is repetitive juxtaposition, declaring the interreaction of the constituent elements, but without inflecting their subsequent trajectories, and therefore neither demanding, nor rising to, prolonged and inquisitive attention. Elements are treated as givens and even as signs because their presence is primarily to point to the ensembles of elements to which they belong and which extend outside the scope of the work.

Furthermore, interpenetrations of different musics, where attempted, will depend precisely for their effect on a nuanced recognition of the boundaries purportedly dispensed with. If respect for boundary — the same interdependence of transgression and limit — is as important for the musician as for the listener, it becomes doubly so in the case of improvisation, where, as I've noted above, a ludic respect for frame definitions is a prerequisite of consequentiality.

## AVANT-GARDE CIRCUS

Finally, the urge to eradicate boundaries, as if they were merely formal and psychological, fails to register the social basis for distinctions between musics. No real interpenetration of high and low art, for example, could take place without a radical redistribution of material and cultural benefits in society. Such a redistribution is in fact taking place, but, unfortunately, in quite the opposite direction; the current fashion for breaking down barriers merely reflects the euphoric globalisation of capital through new infrastructures capable of smashing cultural resistance.<sup>5</sup>

The old avant-garde circus of shock, purgation, and psychological trauma is sometimes wheeled in to underwrite a kind of training programme for audiences inhibited by obsolete category distinctions from attaining a truly contemporary and global aesthetic experience.

Further along the same path comes the rejection of any notion of the aesthetic, in favour of a notion of the 'real' or authentic. In this pessimistic view, only the new technology allows the production of music which is sufficiently inhuman, mechanical, and violent, to constitute an adequately authentic response to the de-humanisation of the real world. The pressure of the real forces contemporary art to display rawness of material and incompleteness of assembly. Machines appear in such art as angels of death and agents of vivisection. The work exhibits in its assemblage a horrible toxicity towards any residual organicism. Perhaps the giving up of the aesthetic hurries into fetishistic admiration for elements of the victim situation. The work seems all too adequate as a reflection. It ceases to have any character of an alternative hypothesis. It mingles with the impulse to absorb into self the destructive power of the alien world.

## DISOBEY HISTORY

So what does all this add up to? The collisions occurring between particular musics and particular technologies are real collisions. We have, as individuals, so little power to confront what appear as autonomous processes of history that we are, each to a different degree, tempted to align with them, to possess them. Yet no better models for obedience to history exist than those other individuals — those whom we presume to be very powerful. Where music chooses to act out on its own small stage the logic of the given, this echoes curiously the form of other graver capitulations on greater stages. If we read the statements made by the presidents and managers of the world's most powerful institutions, such as those currently accelerating the privatisation of all human culture, we see them revealed as mere agents of what they deem to be historical necessities. Only by the most ruthless submission to Power do such individuals hold power over us. If music is to affirm another kind of power, arising in us, yet both from, and for, others, it must vigilantly disobey history, especially when history promises the neon thrill of violating the past. However the technological discourse of triumphant capitalism is negated, aesthetic autonomy is the only guarantee of critical force. Whatever music speaks, it speaks in itself. I like to think that improvisation, in particular, could speak in itself that moment in which the duality of stability and subversion has ceased to be an intelligent paradigm.

TIM HODGKINSON

### Notes

1. Some of this argument draws on earlier articles, and in particular *Sulla Libera Improvvisazione* in *Musica/Realtà* 15, Milan, Dec 1984.
2. The best exposition on Gould's ideas about this is in *Glenn Gould, Music & Mind* by Geoffrey Payzant, Key Porter, 1984.
3. For a discussion on sadomasochism in music performance, see the first part of Edward Said's *Musical Elaborations*, Chatto & Windus, 1991.
4. On IRCAM I highly recommend *Rationalizing Culture* by Georgina Born, University of California Press, 1995.
5. The best critical overviews I've found on this are assembled in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 1996, in the dossier *Internet, L'Effroi et l'Extase*.

BEFORE YOUR VERY EARS

Enjoying considerable success both as a "New Complexity" composer (inspired by improvisation) and an improviser (using sampling technology and electronics), **RICHARD BARRETT** gave a dynamic performance with violinist Mary Oliver at the 1996 LMC Festival. We were so impressed we asked him to go into more detail.

I started using a sampler in the context of FURT, the duo of myself and Paul Obermayer, around 1987.\* While samplers are at the centre of the FURT setup, we also use live signal-processing and live playback of prerecorded CDs. In my other improvisational activities (e.g., in the duo with Mary Oliver) I use only the sampler and computer, which together can approach the responsiveness and fluency of an acoustic instrument: getting to that point has been my principal avenue of 'research' in recent years, as opposed (temporarily) to live sampling. One of my central interests is in the instrumentalising of the resources of electronic music. A sampler or a digital synthesiser isn't really yet an 'instrument,' but rather a commercially produced device whose designers had priorities quite other than mine or those of most people involved in 'experimental music' in all its diversity. A sampler has no personality, but must be given one by the musician before it can be called an instrument. To use a compositional analogy, a sampler is like a blank sheet of manuscript paper, which can be inscribed with any 'notes' a musician may 'compose.' In a sense, a note written on a score for a piano or whatever is also a 'sample.'

But why samples? I can think of two reasons immediately. First, a sampled sound has already contained within it the complexity of acoustic sounds (as opposed to synthesised sounds, that is): I am interested in sounds which have an inner structure which the sampler can

place, as it were, under a microscope, test its reaction with other sounds, and so on. Perhaps because of coming from the situation of originally using somewhat 'primitive' equipment, I've been more interested in finding out what can be done with a sound, how it can be sculpted into new shapes which respond to my own 'desire for sound,' rather than in preserving its original identity as a 'cultural fragment' or whatever. Many of the samples I use do indeed originate from found sources, CDs and so on (though many also originate from acoustic recordings made by myself and Paul Obermayer, or from musicians we've asked to provide source material, or from synthesisers and — increasingly — from other samples which have already been "sculpted" in some way; but my emphasis is always on the musical potential of the sounds rather than on their 'foundness.' I tend to think of the 'quotation' approach, at least from my own aesthetic corner, as something like an admission of failure — failure of one's own musical materials and structures to take on a life of their own and falling back on the knee-jerk effect of recognisable sound-bites (especially if they're sufficiently obscure that those in the know can impress their friends with 'spot-the-sample' trivia). This isn't to say, however, that such failures have no function in music; far from it.

A second reason for sampling is that I've always been interested in *musique concrete* — much of FURT's music relates quite audibly to that tradition, but

with this important development: the use of samplers enables us to carry out the classical *concrete* operations, as well as many more, in real time as opposed to 'studio time'. As with *musique concrete*, these operations (acceleration and deceleration with their concomitant transpositions of pitch, reversal, looping, etc) articulate both the technical and emotional structure of the music to an important degree. But the immediacy of response and openness to unexpected pathways which arise from an improvisational approach to performance mean that the process of *discovery* is also taking place in real time. The 'haptic' element of *musique concrete* production, the physical presence and malleability of sounds in the form of pieces of magnetic tape, can be transmuted into an element of performance, as sounds evolve, collide, disintegrate, recombine, and dissolve under the performer's hands, before your very ears.

As for the future, FURT is presently working on projects at STEIM on the development of semi-automated and structured live sampling procedures, and on the three-dimensional sound-projection of the results. After a period in which we've concentrated on developing our 'purely' musical identity and abilities with whatever technology we can afford or get hold of, now seems the right time to continue the FURT project in developing new tools to approach the objectives which have emerged.

RICHARD BARRETT

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FURT began with Casio SK-1 and SK-5 portable sampling keyboards. We sampled live from various sources including each other (live sampling was the only option, since these keyboards have no means to store their sounds). The SK-5 has a total sampling time of a couple of seconds or so, with a sound quality which could be described as 'no fidelity', though this wasn't in itself a problem, for reasons I'll deal with presently. By 1992 we were using two Ensoniq samplers, a Mirage and an EPSI 6+, since which time the Mirage has been replaced by an Akai S-1000. The EPSI 6+ is a highly useful piece of equipment, in many ways: it's fairly cheap and incorporates extensive possibilities for treating samples once they are recorded, and controlling various parameters externally (for which I use the *Lick Machine* software developed at STEIM in Amsterdam, running on a Macintosh PowerBook). As well as samplers FURT uses live signal-processing and live playback of prerecorded CDs (another means of using 'samples', in fact, less flexible in performance but with access to enormously more material: up to 650 megabytes or 74 minutes of stereo sound on a CD, as opposed to 2 megabytes of RAM on an EPSI 6+ which has to be loaded and reloaded from floppy discs).

\* Tech. info.

The process of discovery is also taking place in real time

The less I did, the more interesting it was.

ACCIDENTALLY ON PURPOSE

Still in his twenties, New York composer DAVID SHEA has released several extraordinary albums of pieces for samplers alongside live instruments. Before his solo LMC New Aura concert early this year, he told Philip Tagney how he discovered Cantonese Military Hardcore.

Philip Tagney: What instrument do you play?

David Shea: I play a computer. It's disguised as a keyboard and called a sampler. So I have a hard drive, which has the library of all the sounds, and I load the library of sounds into the keyboard and then arrange them, compose things and play them on a piano-type keyboard.

PT: So each key of the keyboard is triggering a different sound?

DS: Right. And what I load in are different programmes and different layouts on the keyboard. Things can be rearranged, or looped, or manipulated, or played traditionally.

PT: How much of the music is planned, and how much is improvised on the occasion?

DS: Almost all of the works are scored in some way. But it's a strange thing, because the computer does really what it wants to. I mean occasionally it'll start to play itself, and crash, and create silences. I gave up trying to control that sort of thing a long time ago. It's really much more about communicating with the machine, and if it wants to go in that direction, I go in that direction. If it happens once it's an accident, but if it happens twice it's structural. So a lot of it is accidental, but the general flow of the thing is planned. Say, if I hold down a key, and the machine just keeps it looping without stopping, even though I've lifted my hand, well then for a while I start to go in the direction of that loop. And that may suggest something else, or a different order. It's letting something be as long as it needs to be.

PT: What interests you about using music that's already there as your building blocks?

DS: I came to it mainly as a practical choice. After a miserable year at the conservatory, I didn't know anybody in New York, I had no money, I had no way to rehearse. So making tape collages and doing solo vocal work was

what I could do if I was going to still continue composing. And that led to composing with what I could find — I had no way to orchestrate, and this was a clear way to orchestrate. And it suggested a whole other type of composition, which I did with turntables, and that was about finding the connections between the materials that were being used. So if you had one record of Albanian bagpipe music, and another one of traditional Hindu scriptural chants, and then another of House music, and then another of big band, and then you left those running — I mean the connections were unbelievable! The less I did, the more interesting it was. So the composing started to lean more towards creating a context where those connections could be heard.

PT: But there's also very vitally a question of selection, isn't there?

DS: Oh, definitely there is. But the selection becomes clear when you listen to what the material needs. I'm not trying to suggest that it's all unintentional, because the context is created very intentionally, but certain things need certain lengths of time to be what they are. Certain ambient sections need to go on six minutes, or they're just nothing, they have no connection to anything. And certain energetic things may need to be two seconds. I follow the material a lot. Also, the contexts and references suggest another structure. If I'm using traditional Japanese music on top of 1930s Hong Kong music — to me that implies a very intense political connection. To use those musics together is something very powerful, and something that has to be respected. Or using combinations, like in a Bollywood film, combinations of something very ancient and very modern at the same time, not synthesised or forced together, or created as a combination, but left...

One example is on the *Hsi-Yu Chi* record (on the Tzadik label). There was Sim Kane, who is the drummer with the Henry Rollins band, and Wu Man, who

is a Chinese *pi'p'a* (lute) player — she is an incredible player. And I asked her to play one of these military style tunes, which are very fast; and I asked Sim to play double-kick hardcore like he usually does. And there was no rehearsal, there was nothing, it was just, do what you do. No one listened to anybody else. They were playing together, but... So for twenty minutes they played double-kick hardcore straight ahead Cantonese military music. And it was incredible. The connection between the two of them while they were playing was like two musicians *deeply playing together*, without synthesising, compromising or changing at all what they did. And that suggested to me that those connections are there, that they already exist, long before I get there. Discovering the connections and exploring them by putting material together, and arranging and listening, is what the compositions are.

The problem when I first started doing these pieces was that you would make one connection, and then another, and then another, and it would go on for an hour. And it was this pastiche that was fine to listen to as a collection of moments, but it had no focus or energy. It would lose momentum and gain momentum, and after a while you get into this pan-acceptance of all things, and everything floats by. The pieces I play now have a lot to do with trying to figure out what sampler playing technique is. I always talk about first generation and second generation sound: first generation being when you hit a string, as opposed to taking a sound that's been recorded, then re-recorded on a sampler, then put out to an audience. That would apply to DJs and anybody working with appropriated recorded material. And the playing techniques are very different. I don't know what they are: I mean, I'm still discovering them, and discovering what the limits are of the technology, because the technology's changing all the time.

**CHILD'S PLAY**

**MARIE GOYETTE**, originally from Canada, is a pianist who has branched out into sampling, improvising and music theatre. She has performed in London at the LMC Festival and most recently as an actress/pianist in the LMC's Operadix season. **Kersten Glandien** interviewed her in Berlin, where Marie has been living since 1989.

**Kersten Glandien:** So you were inspired by what you saw and heard in Berlin?

**Marie Goyette:** Absolutely! The first thing I did that was not so much about playing the piano was I got interested in the *Steinklopfer*, the men who do the sidewalk [Ed: stone-beaters, men with little hammers who repair the small square cobblestones of the Berlin pavements]. I interviewed and recorded them, and then I did a small first piece in the studio in the Technical University. I took all night to do it, it was finished in the morning and it lasts 45 minutes. It's only made with one loop — it's done with a sampler called the "Infernal Machine," which allows you to transform the sounds in real time. We had a bit of tape, we made one loop with one *tak, tak, tak* of the stones, and then we used big pieces of the tape live. We performed the manipulations that I wanted in 45 minutes, and then a couple of hours later we recorded them. You can do it real time, the tape is running, the loop is walking... it was a real loop, with a large tape that you can see turning around. Manipulations followed, and then it was finished.

That got me pretty excited. It's a boring piece — well, kind of nice boring — but it got me into doing more. So after that I did a piece for piano and those stone guys, but live on the street. There were six of them working, just doing their job. We found a place where the pavement needed repairing. It was a Friday afternoon and they worked a couple of hours extra. I had a grand piano there on the street. And it started raining (*laughs*), it was very nice; so they put an umbrella over me. I was the only one covered, because they had rented a Steinway piano and they didn't want any drops on it. But the poor guys were out in the rain with the audience!

There was another piece which I played in many museums, a piece for four ghetto blasters: "Es Stinkt Aber Es Klingt Gut" [*It Stinks But It Sounds Good*]. All the material is from Trabant cars. I was invited to do a piece for the opening of the Berlin Wall — my first impression. I was living near the Kudamm at that time, that big shopping street, and the first thing when the wall opened, at midnight, was the invasion of that sound. Every day afterwards you could hear it everywhere, and I started recording it. The four ghetto blasters are rather similar to a Trabant themselves, the sound is hollow... But then this piece was taken very seriously, which really amazed me. The sounds are only Trabant sounds, again done with the "Infernal Machine" sampler, and it's really like a story, a Trabant telling its story. There's a long beginning with the starter, you know, the car getting started, then the car almost drives into the water at one point, then there's an explosion of all these cars — it's quite funny. And then it finishes very softly: *put, put, put, put...*

I don't like electronics that much, that's the problem. I just like simple things. This piece was very simple. A child could do that. Electronically it's nothing, it's just a modern way of cutting. If I took a music score and cut it up, that would be the same thing. But what doesn't interest me any more is the complexity of the manipulations, so that you can't even hear *how* it's done.

On a record it's one thing, but as a real-time live physical theatre, that's a complete other challenge. I've been to a million electronic music concerts, with junk all over the tables, and, you know (*imitates electronic music*), the music is incredible, but the theatre, the whole gesture of the thing is miserable, because there's no connection to the physicality of the sound. So the challenge was, how does the computer become this physically played instrument?

**PT:** So people looking at you perform will see movement which relates to the musical sounds in a meaningful way?

**DS:** In a very traditional way. It's seeing someone hit a piano keyboard and a sound comes out. There's a very direct, easy-to-see physicality; not always, but that's a part of being sucked into something that's just a cinematic wash, that's very referential to something you might have experienced, like a James Bond film. People have baggage that they bring to that, and that's very powerful. To cut something up and play it like a physical instrument means that in my performance there is a pulling back and forth, a tension: you can live in the imaginary memory of it — or you can be involved in this almost traditional playing, like free jazz or classical piano.



Es Stinkt aber Es Klingt Gut (It Stinks But It Sounds Good)

The pieces are full on from start to finish. Digital sparks fly.

## The Sampler on Trial:

### THROUGH THE DIGITAL LOOKING GLASS

'Samplers took tape music and just blew it open. All of a sudden you could do things that were just dreams ten years before.'

Bob Ostertag was away in El Salvador working as a journalist when that development was happening. It seems that when he came back eight years later he was able to see the potentials of the medium with fresh eyes rather than just being influenced by what other people were already doing with the equipment.

In *Resonance 3.1* I interviewed Bob about his early work including his pre-sampling technology sampling innovations, his use of documentary recordings as source material, notating the sounds of a queer riot he participated in for a Kronos String Quartet commission and a 'virtual band' project he had just set in motion called *Say No More*. Two years later we felt it worth getting an update on Bob's various projects including *Say No More* which was about to release its third CD, *Verbatim*, as we go to press.

The project started when Bob commissioned independent recordings by four advanced improvisers (Gerry Hemingway, Joey Baron, Mark Dresser and Phil Minton). By making samples of small units (phrases, patterns) of the musicians' vocabulary he was able to put them back together in a very tightly-knit imagined musical dialogue. The two works (available as a CD on RecRec Music) have an over-arching musical logic which improvisors naturally avoid (largely preferring 'moment-form') and a level of synchronisation otherwise impossible to achieve. The pieces are full on from start to finish. Digital sparks fly.

Bob then took his *concrète*-style composition and gave it back to the band as a tape and a score and made them perform it live. Parts of it Bob notated conventionally in order to sync the rhythms but the more complex stuff however he left blank and the musi-

## BARRETT:SHEA:GOYETTE:OSTERTAG 4 Practitioners make their case

*Ex-journalist and composer BOB OSTERTAG performed in London at the ICA recently.*

*Phil England caught up with him there.*

cians were asked to make their own notes from the tape. Since the score is derived directly from the musician's own unique, idiosyncratic vocabulary it bypasses the usual limitations of orthodox notation. It also raised some unique problems for the musicians.

'The live performances of the works turned out to be quite a challenge for the players. I had created the compositions by extracting very small sections from the middle of extended improvisations, altering them to fit into an ensemble scheme and then developing them in various ways over time.

'Often I was using source material that involved the use of extended instrumental techniques the players had never used in a composed context; in some cases which they had never fully articulated to themselves. I was asking the players to repeat these manoeuvres, on cue, in sequences that were often not idiomatic to their improvisational styles nor their instruments, and using shapes that I had imposed' (from the sleeve notes to *Say No More In Person*).

*Phil Minton on Say No More:* 'When I heard the tape composition Bob had made I thought it was quite amazing: it really did sound like we were playing together. It seemed miles away from me: a lot of the things are physically impossible to perform live. You know, I have to breathe every now and again. 'Bob wrote out a score afterwards and we all listened to it and it was obvious we couldn't do some of the things that were on the tape but just to try and do it as best we could. Keep the structure much the same. So when it said 'fast yodel' I would do a fast yodel. After a bit of doing this on tour I thought, well I wouldn't mind doing something else other than that fast yodel at that point. But I took it as Bob's work really and tried to do it as best as possible. It's a pretty set piece but within it, in the live performances, there are actual improvisations. It's a bit like how jazz works. There are structures that we go back to and then we take off again.'

I had asked Phil Minton whether working on the project had changed the way he thought about his language and how he deployed it in performance. It was a question that pretty much drew a blank.

'Well, Phil's been around the block! It's wonderful working with him in *Say No More* you can push him — he just goes for it. He always complains but he always goes for it. His sound vocabulary is stunning. When I called him and told him I'd finished *Verbatim* (the third part of the *Say No More* project) he said, "Oh, wonderful. I think I'll go lie down".'

How strictly did free-spirited improvisers like Phil Minton stick to the score? I imagined he would be quite liberal with his interpretation?

'It will vary according to the section of the piece — the sections that are particularly rhythmic are very precisely notated. The spirit of the *Say No More* performances is really not to try and recreate anything exactly. With the live stuff the objective is to create a body of ensemble material that's really organic to that group and there's no other way that group could have arrived at that material than by going through the process they went through. The live performance should not be a static mirror of the computer piece.'

Another sampling collaboration Bob has underway is with Marilyn Crispell and an instrument called the Disk Clavier. This is a grand piano with a digital file which records the motion of the keys and can subsequently repeat a performance autonomously in the manner of a player-piano.

'They've been around for a while but it's a kind of novelty item because they're incredibly expensive. They haven't quite worked out what to do with them. I think what they had in mind was that extremely wealthy people could put them in their living rooms and instead of playing a CD of someone playing Bach, they could buy a digital file and actually have the concert in their living room.'

## The Sampler on Trial

'So Marilyn's recorded a series of improvisations into one of these and then I'm taking the file and rehashing it.' A two CD set is planned — one of Marilyn's improvisations and one of Ostertag's reworkings of her material. This will then be transcribed for performance by a live piano ensemble and can also work as a gallery installation with the piece being performed in a ghost-like fashion by the Disk Clavier.

A planned duo CD with Otomo Yoshihide has been put back after Ostertag asked for permission to use a sample that was integral to the piece but was refused. The CD entitled *Twins* features source material by Chris Cutler (drums), Herb Robertson (trumpet) and Yagi Mishiyo (koto) alongside Otomo's and Ostertag's independent resampled versions. Otomo and Ostertag concert tours are under discussion for 1997 with guest vocalists including Mike Patton (Faith No More), Yamatsuka Eye (Boredoms, Hanatarash) and Justin Bond (drag artist). A collaboration with San

Francisco group Mr Bungle is also planned and Bob has just completed a composition utilising his currently undocumented archive of samples.

'I'm not really interested these days in releasing records of improvisation. I do improvised gigs but I'm not interested in records as a document of the concert. I just find it such a completely different experience listening to tapes of improvised performances. Improvised performances that I as performer and the audience agree are really good oftentimes on tape are not, and vice versa. To me they are just completely different media.'

Sampling isn't Bob's only concern. Neither is it his only *modus operandi*. He is planning a collaboration with clothes designer Scott Pimentel and earlier this year he was commissioned by a touring art exhibition called *What about AIDS?* to produce a big cross artform piece involving actor, film and lights. This piece, *Spiral*, is based on the last text written by artist and writer David Wojnarowicz. Written whilst

Wojnarowicz was dying from AIDS it constitutes a first-hand description of dying with obvious parallels to Derek Jarman's *Blue*. Wojnarowicz talks about feeling as if he is turning into glass and the piece uses a set of glass instruments (harp, marimba, bull-roarers, and some which have no conventional analogue) specially constructed for the piece by Oliver Di Cicco. The film (emotional scratch animation by Quebecois filmmaker Pierre Herbert) is projected onto amplified plate glass which also doubles as a percussion instrument. Bob and David had originally planned to work together on Bob Ostertag's commission for the Kronos Quartet but time did not permit. Instead Bob realised *Spiral* as a posthumous collaboration.

### Recent discography:

*Say No More* (RecRec Music)

*Say No More In Person* (Transit)

*Fear No Love* (Avant)

*Verbatim* (Rastascan Records)

(Available from Bob, Rastascan, Impetus or ReR/Recommended.)





### Burning Decks 1

**MARTIN TÊTREAUULT** is a French Canadian from Montreal who performs with turntables. In London for an LMC New Aura concert, he explained to **Philip Tagney** and **Ed Baxter** that he doesn't have a sampler, but he does have a record called *How To Train Your Dog*.

**Resonance:** Can you tell us something about your background?

**Martin Tétreault:** First of all I was in fine art: I was involved in a conceptual approach, and I was cutting up paper. One day I decided to cut up something else. I took a record, cut it into two slices, fixed side A and side B together with tape, put it onto record pickups and it worked. It all started from that.

**R:** So you had no formal music training, and you weren't aware of other people experimenting with records?

**MT:** No, I did it alone. This was in 1984. Five years later someone asked me to collaborate in the *Broken Music* exhibition, and make a performance with Christian Marclay. Then I realised that some others had done the same as me, but I hadn't known about them.

**R:** What are the aesthetic implications of what you are doing?

**MT:** I think right now I am changing. The work I did until now was mostly based on quotation, you know, taking a little part and adding it to another. I'm still doing that, but now I'm playing more with the physical, with the record itself, the noise it can produce. All the possibilities of the record itself, not only the music, but the object. You can cut it, splice it, scratch it, erase it, put paper on it, and so on.

**R:** Tell us something about your New Aura performance tonight.

**MT:** I've brought a lot of old turntables from Montreal. Some of them are called *Calliphone*, this was the turntable found in every school when I was a kid. Each turntable has its own possibilities and its own sound. I also have a *Technics* turntable—a friend of mine put a switch on it so I can play reverse and forwards at 100 rpm. And I use a balloon which I put around the tone-arm: I call it 'frotophone,' and it creates friction between the balloon and the record—it's very funny to do it! I have some



spoken word records, in Montreal I have a collection of maybe 200: *How To Train Your Dog*, *How To Dance Disco*, *How To Save Your Life*...

**R:** Do you see a problem maintaining an individual quality in the music you're making? David Shea remarked that if you have too many elements in the sound, then it becomes a kind of continuum again. Do you think there's an optimum level between not having enough material and using too much material?

**MT:** Too much material is dangerous. I realised this some weeks ago, because I buy a lot of records and I don't have time to listen to them. After a show someone came up to me and said, "Hey, you used a Bartok String Quartet." I said that I didn't know, because I don't use the music because of who wrote it, but for the music itself. I have a selection of electronic music, drumming, guitar music, so when I want to make a cut I say, OK, I'll take a bit of electronic... this is a way I can build music.

**R:** So it's like orchestration?

**MT:** Yes. And I can reproduce that many times. It's not only improvisation. I make a mark on the record—I learned that in Bruire, a band that I play with in Montreal. Every night I had to play the same cut, it's this record, at this place, at this moment, at this speed. It can be very precise. It's like sampling, but it's mechanical sampling. Someone asked me, "Why don't you use a sampler?" I answered, "It's not old enough." When

no one is interested in samplers any more, that's when I'll use them!

**R:** Why? What's the attraction of old technology?

**MT:** Mechanics! I've found new ways to use turntables, just through mechanics, varispeed and so on. I'm not yet ready to explore samplers. But I did some collaborations with electro-acoustic musicians, and there's a good balance, because their sounds are very real and cultured while with me it's more *Art Brut*. So if you put those things together... I'm very interested in the larger scale—every sound has its own quality. There's no sound better than another—it's how, where, and why you use it.

**R:** I'm interested that you reject samplers. Essentially you're interested in an end result, and it seems to me you could get the same result from samplers or CDs.

**MT:** For me the sampler is too much 'itself.' You know the origin of the sound, and if I play this sound it will be this sound. But when I put on a record and I make a wrong move—*whoops!*—the needle skips and I have to play with that.

**R:** So does your music mostly depend on spontaneity?

**MT:** Yes, a part of it does. I prepare a road, and I have a place where I start, a place where I stop, and a place where I ask myself "Where am I going?" And the result is what we call the show.

# Burning Decks: Martin Tetreault, DJ Spooky

## 2 DJs reanimating the dead soul of vinyl

### Burning Decks 2

Also known as *Tha Subliminal Kid*, *Tha Ontological Assassin* and *Paul D. Miller*, DJ SPOOKY was in London earlier this year to play an LMC New Aura concert in a duo with the electronic trumpeter Ben Neill. Ed Baxter talked to him about cultural entropy, mending your own computer, and being 25 in the mid-nineties.

**Ed Baxter:** Paul, can you tell us something about how you came recently to be collaborating with Ben Neill, who is a student of LaMonte Young and comes from a contemporary classical background? And maybe tell us something also about the 'Tone Club' that takes place at *The Kitchen*, which you curate.

**DJ Spooky:** It's a long story. When I was in school I had a radio show named *Dr Seuss's Eclectic Jungle*, and it was focussing on extreme collage, four turntables, several CD players, stuff that would allow you to have a stream of sound going continuously, whether it be loops or cassettes, cut-ups or whatever. My degree was in Philosophy and French Lit., and I did my senior thesis on *Luc Feurbach and the End of Rational Thought in European Contemporary Philosophy*, but critiquing that from the viewpoint of an African-American male. The aesthetics of the post-rational is what I talked about. But DJ-ing was always an extension of my writing. When I graduated I moved to Paris for a while, and lived there working on two books.

When I got back to New York I wanted to see these written things manifest, but I was really disappointed with the conventional club scene, and also disappointed with the conventional art-music scene, and the art world in general. That was two years ago. Mainly I wanted to see some way of fusing all these different elements. To me there's never been any barriers between these things; but as we all know, music and its distribution tends to reflect social hierarchy, so art-music people are still trapped or entrenched in what is basically an early seventies aesthetic of what is experimental music, and the focus is on the live performance or the traditionally validated musical instrument. This was for me a very disappointing situation.

I started doing a lot of happenings called *Lolandia* in Brooklyn with several friends, specifically Karen Lovett, who does conceptual fashion design, and DJ Olive, or Greg Ash, who was also a painter.

There was a very big buzz about this kind of stuff, and people like Ben Neill, who were in the conventional art scene, would come to the events and figure, "Oh this is what the young people are up to." We would build mazes of urban detritus, or mazes of architectural designs, and the maze would continually shift throughout the evening, and we would have five or six DJs going at the same time. You'd turn left and you'd hear Heavy Metal doom music, and you would turn right and there's *Jungle*, up some stairs and it's ambient. The idea was to have a de-centred event that would reflect the entropic nature of urban culture.

**EB:** Do you feel that alate sixties aesthetic, the kind of thing that Alan Kaprow was interested in, is that more to your taste than the early seventies? Or is it a bit of cheek on my part to suggest that you're going back even further than your peer group?

**DJS:** Well, probably even further! The stuff I feel is really reflective of what I was doing was the Italian Futurists in the early part of the century, Luigi Russolo with his noise generators, or for that matter the whole dada movement. But there is also the nineties aesthetic of a highly literary-oriented movement. Everyone's in their early twenties. Most of the people doing these events don't read about the sixties. My generation has to deal with a media vacuum, and most people don't find a historical reference for what they're doing, they just say, "This is what I'm doing, and it reflects my interests."

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**EB:** How old are you?

**DJS:** I just turned twenty-five. Been out of school about three years and trying to figure out what to do, because the conventional art-world is so sterile at the moment, at least in the States. I'm not sure what's happening over here: I was just at a show of Sarah Morris at the White Cube gallery and that was pretty interesting, or Scanner and what he's up to. There's a sense of rebellion against the extreme sterility of the American art-scene, and there's no cross-fertilisation anymore. They've done the whole pop-art thing and it's old news, so I'm just trying to figure out with these happenings what to do.

**EB:** But you seem to place yourself quite definitely in a known historical continuum, at the end of the twentieth century. You're an intellectual, you study books, you relate texts to musical events. It's not a complete surprise that you should team up with Ben Neill, who worked with David Wojnarowicz. Last time Ben Neill was in London was to perform, posthumous to Wojnarowicz's death, a version of *ITSOFOMO*, which used text, and Wojnarowicz was known as a visual artist. How do you interact with Neill's music?

**DJS:** I like to see my stuff as walking a fine line between abstraction and cacophony, chaos and order. His music is not very chaotic, it's very immersive, which is good, there's nothing wrong

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with that. There's different compositional approaches; my sound tends to be a lot more organic and I even sample scratchy records, a little hiss and popping, and I put that in just to have a sense of timelessness. Even if it's a crystal clear rendition on a CD, I always sample the hissing and popping of an old record.

**EB:** *There is a kind of fascination being displayed now with machines that are somehow obsolescent, but that have a peculiar numinous quality because of that—like the way that the railroad in American mythology arises out of its obsolescence, and is celebrated in a fantastic way by artists like Sergio Leone. There seems to be a tendency in much contemporary music that is interested in the obsolescent quality of vinyl and how it carries with it a history that is somehow decaying.*

**DJS:** I tend to see it as a form where the record becomes a sort of fetish. I know people who are obsessive vinyl collectors and I'm the same. Last time I counted them I have about 15,000 which is up from 10,000 a couple of years ago, and that was a little while ago. They're in storage, I can't keep them all at home. My collection is really diverse, but generationally speaking the warm analogue sound of the record really has... I'm trying to put a finger on the exact emotional sentiment... not nostalgia, but a sense of warmth and comfort. I don't

want to put down digital music because I'm quite into it, but there's a sense where I'm listening to digital and it's too clean. With a lot of conventional Techno or House it's too crystal clear, but that's from my own personal viewpoint, it's not a critique of the actual composition.

On a generational thing, I think records are actually making a huge comeback with the DJ. They're cheap, comparatively speaking, and they're also distributable, you can make mix tapes from them, there's a whole new mythology or constellation round this.

Here we are confronted with all these technologies, and most people have no clue as to how it works, or for that matter how to fix it. So the notion of 'techné' or 'psyche' becomes utterly magical. The Scottish philosopher David Hume said, "Custom is the only thing that holds us all together." And in this day and age for someone to flick on a light switch and expect the light to go on, the only thing that holds that together is this magical notion. If you don't know exactly where the wires are, the density of the wires or the amount of electrical voltage they can carry, then the only thing that allows you to interact with this stuff is a sense of magic.

**No-one thinks that they can have a specific impact any more. It's an eclipse of the self probably unheard of in previous histories. There's no sense of personal responsibility.**

**EB:** *So you feel a kind of existential perspective is waning and that unconsciousness is on the increase?*

**DJS:** Definitely. I keep thinking about this every day, no-one knows how to fix anything, and it's a condition fostered by the manufacturing companies, I'm sure. If it was up to me I would have an electronics training course from kin-

dergarten on up, because otherwise we have at least three generations coming up that will have no idea about electronic stuff, unless it's as a hobby.

**EB:** *So you see the immediate future of music as a return to something like... skiffle?*

**DJS:** No, I just see people using the equipment in any way that they can. People are buying the stuff, but in terms of a pure notion of being able to completely dig into the instrument, the sampler or whatever, as far as I've read, this used to be considered to be part and parcel of using this thing. You had to know how to fix it, put it back together... if your violin broke... I mean, most people know how to change the pre-sets and the settings on stuff, that's easily done, but to change the overall instrument, that's something that you have to be an engineer or a technician to really do. Half the problems that people get with these computers that they throw out are completely minor — an extra piece of soldering, or a new wire or a new transistor and you will have a brand new machine that you sell again.

**EB:** *People always want to upgrade their technology don't they? The seasons have been replaced by whatever is new in a shop window.*

**DJS:** That's where we get to the point of neo-capitalist structures of distribution, and the American fascination with the new is becoming a world-wide paradigm. America was the first country to have 'new' as the driving thing of the entire ball-game. In Europe people were very conservative towards the telephone, for example: Thomas Edison had to do a lot of convincing, of the British especially, because they thought

it would break down a lot of class barriers; but in America to have a telephone was to step into the future.

It's intriguing that all the major music movements have come out the States out of this mythology of the future... Techno, Hip-hop, breakbeat — although Jungle is probably the first new

music contribution specifically from Britain. Most of these other electronic musics have come out of the States, and out of areas of urban implosion like Detroit and Techno.

**EB:** *You're talking in terms of your music of elongating the present, and you're critiquing your peer group, who, rather than face a loose wire in the present, will merely wait a month for the new version to come out. You're deeply critical then of the whole American project of heading west and up into the sky... the kind of mythology that figures even as radical as Sun Ra would invest in and were consciously part of?*

**DJS:** At this point there are no expanding frontiers anymore except the Internet, which they've already called the new frontier that everyone's marching into. There's an expansionist notion, a 'Manifest Destiny,' which was the reason we used to invade Mexico and appropriate their land, but I don't know if I can say 'we' of a European-American aesthetic that somehow permeates the entire ball-game over there. It's killing the planet, I think. The pollution, the economies of scale, all of these things... the average TV contains so many toxic elements that it's mind-blowing, and even the shoes we wear, the jeans, the dyes that are used... the only way the planet's going to be able to deal with this kind of technology that it's created is through bio-technology, which God knows will probably create even more nightmares, with genetic engineering. But I see the thrust of this new mythology going towards an Internet as a focus of communications and telephony.

You can't even say, "Critique it, or be critical of it," because it's a world-wide paradigm. And there is no *outside* of it. It's "The system, the system," everybody's talking about the system. No-one thinks that they can have a specific impact any more. It's an eclipse of the self probably unheard of in previous histories. There's no sense of personal responsibility. For me to have that critical stance, which I do, it makes me feel very absurd. I'm wearing shoes, I have jeans on, I brush my teeth and use fluoridated water... I'm just as much part of it. Even your average *Greenpeace* person, unless they're wearing completely organic shoes made from rice or leaves or something... you're part and parcel of the entire structure of both production and distribution.

I'm just trying to figure out where it's all going. It's a pretty depressing picture.

But then again the planet will always survive regardless of whether or not the human race is here. We have people able to travel at such high speeds, and if some kind of virus breaks out or something that's really lethal, it can spread world-wide. There's a book called *Earth Abides*, it's one of my favourites, a late sixties science-fiction book. A virus spreads precisely in that way and wipes out most of humanity.

Then again, everyone wants history to end in their lifetime. That's my other bad habit, I can always say *on the other hand* there's this and this... I see people being conditioned not to think or question their environment or the devices that they're using. There's a complete

**To me the DJ is the cybernetic inheritor of the jazz tradition of improvisation.**

acceptance of newness — new! new! new! More glitz, more bells and whistles on a computer that you don't really need any bells and whistles on, like *Windows 95*.

To critique it is to say I might as well just build a spaceship and get out of here. Which I did want to do when I was a kid. I was deeply interested in interstellar travel, and I actually have designs of spaceships I wanted to build. I was always fascinated with travelling faster than the speed of light. This is my American pioneer spirit... wanting to get out of here and go: that's just as much part of my mythology as well, you know. I have a little phrase, "Where has he gone? To a song?" Maybe that's my frontier, digging into the sounds, and exploring those. Meanwhile I'll probably be jumping off the Empire State Building someday soon.

**EB:** *Can you tell us about the relation between text and your music that you alluded to earlier? Your text seemed to arise from a post-modern critique in which free-floating signifiers are the vehicle for thought, and your music is maybe also within that area. And if this is not complicating things, could you tell us something about how you square your futurist aspirations of a post-historical aesthetic with your position as a black American who alludes to Sun Ra and to the rural blues on a historical continuum? Because there seem to be two*

*divergent paths, and where they meet is very interesting - and that seems to be the position you want to occupy.*

**DJS:** Let's put it this way. Think about the etymology of two of my favourite words at this moment: 'persona' and 'phonograph'. *Phonograph* means the phonetics of graphology, the phonetics of sound, the needle on the record playing; and *persona* means 'That through which sound enters'. So there's this notion of creating a persona, which is the DJ using the turntables. I could easily do my set via the computer, mainly for the iconography of it, but I prefer to use the turntables.

But as an African American male, many of the traditions that inform my

music focus on the social construction of subjectivity. Most African-American music focuses on people borrowing riffs, like jazz. There are certain motifs that come in and out of the songs and there are certain rhythms that are named. Then there's the migration of West African rhythm patterns up through the south to the north, where we get the urbanised industrial aesthetic that switches blues to a more schizophrenic, chaotic jazz. To me the DJ is the cybernetic inheritor of the jazz tradition of improvisation.

But on the other hand we are also using a fusion of European technology and West African sound to create these kind of things. When you're dealing with externalised memory, which is to me what records represent, they become a way of appropriating a past and re-configuring it, using the association lines that hold them together in memory. It's what I call cutting the association lines between the past and present so that the future can leak through.

Right now American culture is in such a strange racial deadlock. No-one is going anywhere anytime soon. There's 270 million people in that area and the tensions between the two are rising,

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and it's an absurd cycle. When I went to West Africa I realized, *Jesus Christ! I'm very American actually.* We're very Americanised and the African motifs which inform the culture are almost subconscious or unspoken. This is an example: in Harlem you can go to this market where there are West African merchants selling fake African cloth, printed in Texas, but which looks authentic. Next to them there's fake Nike and Adidas with very futuristic stripes and stuff, and people selling these sports outfits, very chic urban sports gear. And if you look down at everyone's shoes, they're wearing these strange globular tennis shoes — so if you look around you have copies of West African stuff versus copies of American corporate sports culture, and people wearing both comfortably, and listening to a boom-box of hip-hop made of samples of a drum from 1960 with a horn from 1930 and a bass line from 1974. And it gets to the point where you're seeing a multi-valent cultural text in this one marketplace, which to me is one way of encapsulating this notion of what is a market of culture.

**EB:** *The market provides some kind of resolution to social and aesthetic chaos, you feel? Are you as comfortable as one of the rural blues players like, say, Skip James? Or perhaps a better example would be the Roaring Lion, the Trinidadian singer, who throughout his career was very comfortable with the recorded form, and not bothered about notions of exploitation through commodities, because he was making a living from recording. He was quite critical of the notions in popular West Indian culture that Calypso specifically arises from West African folk culture. The Lion's position is that the myth of Africa is essentially destructive to people in Trinidad and that Calypso was forged very much in the present.... obviously we're talking about the late twenties now. Is that a question or a comment? I'm not sure. (Laughter).*

**DJS:** All these musics arise from being forged in an isolated African American community in the diaspora of dispersion. People come up with whatever rhythms they can deal with to help them get through their situation. I think the West African rhythmic tradition is part and parcel of all the musics that slowly arose from the wreckage of the slave experience.

**EB:** *In the physicality and structure of your performances with the turntables, you seem to be arguing in a quiet way that all of that is inscribed, in a Derridian sense... where the needle actually becomes the physical emblem of the pressure of Western industrial culture upon those rhythms.*

**DJS:** Goldie has a phrase, he says, "Any time you drop the needle to a record you are in our world, and when you take the needle off, you're out." Which is an interesting way of putting it. All these things point to culture becoming an entropic force that becomes malleable and distributable, and even point to this notion of music as a distributed network of consciousness, where you can take bits and pieces of other musics and other people's expression, and reconfigure them to your own taste and then slowly distribute them back out via mixed tapes, via 7-inches, via radio, via Internet (a lot of my mixes are now down-loadable via the Internet). There are so many ways of distributing these modalities of consciousness, that it becomes a point of going back to the West African aesthetic of rhythm as the conveyor of messages.

But all these things point to technology and to the Western European aesthetics of a classical, formal text being completely inverted and burst apart. At the same time it validates both the US and European aesthetic, and the African aesthetic through what I like to call the American microwave (rather than melting pot). But it's brought out all these different bits and pieces of all the cultures, and allowed the flotsam and jetsam to create these strange experiences shimmering at the edge of perception.

Sound becomes reflective of a social hierarchy that's anarchic and entropic. When I hear Coltrane I hear people skipping and fleeing through the geometric regularity of the urban landscape, and then you hear Sun Ra and you hear the end experience of that continuum; and the next thing, you hear Goldie's more underground 12-inches, and you hear the cybernetic inheritance of that same kind of chaotic, schizophrenic, paranoiac, conflicting impulses in the music. Like jungle, even the jazz loops and the drums sound very much like a Max Roach drum solo. All these things are methods of what I like to call prolonging the present, the

loop becomes a method of stretching it out and allowing a space in which the mind can find calm and peace in the midst of... (sound of siren from street)... you hear the siren?

**EB:** *The question that begs is, what is the purpose of your methodology? If everything is in a chaotic soup then it becomes difficult for people not as well-informed or as conscious as you to tell what is going on.*

**DJS:** Mystance is actionary rather than reactionary, let's put it that way. I think music has a way of reflecting social hierarchy in bringing cultural values to people who wouldn't necessarily deal with it if there wasn't music. I mean, you saw blues slowly bringing Western African notions of rhythm and modality into what eventually turned into rock. At this point in the game you can have a multiplicity, there's no one specific single narrative anymore — and my political stance is saying that there are many truths, not one truth, and there are many loves. To me music and love — I'm talking in an abstract sense of love — to me that is the only way we are going to survive into the 21st century because of the amount of pollution going on and the ethnic warfare, and this kind of stuff is definitely increasing and it is a self-reinforcing loop. Music becomes a way of saying, "Alright, we can deal with these things, you can listen to my music and I can listen to your music." You can borrow from elements and slowly but surely check out the other cultures. Knowledge and understanding is the only way... if you can understand someone's culture you can at least sit and talk with them. There's madness going on, but if we can understand one another then at least we can change things for the better. It's perhaps an idealistic thing, but it's a very cynical time in the world, and I guess it takes a bit of strength to be idealistic at the moment.





## new music by

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# Machine Guns & Tumbling Coconuts

So-called 'World Music' is all around us, from TV commercials to movie soundtracks. An album from Mozambique is advertised as 'an ethno-beat sampler's paradise of sounds.' And did those pygmies get paid for singing over those synthesisers? We asked ex-ethnic recordist **RAGNAR JOHNSON** to cast an eye back over his years 'in the field' with a microphone and a Uher tape recorder.

As someone who has made many recordings of ethnic music, I am convinced that it is better in all instances to record music wherever possible. The only alternative, to decline to record because of the effort or the possibility of deleterious consequences, affords the absolute moral virtue which results from a total lack of commitment. Recording music saves something unique and of the moment permanently for posterity. No matter what may be done to package and present it as a commercial product it has ultimately been preserved in the form of the original tapes.

Between 1971 and 1980 I made field recordings in Ethiopia, Yemen Arabia and Papua New Guinea. Seven records were released of music edited from these tapes.

## ETHIOPIA

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1971 my co-recordist Ralph Harrison and I taped professional folk musicians in a *tej beit* ('mead bar') in the slum area. The major problem was preventing the staff of bar girls, many of whom had crosses tattooed on their foreheads as a mark of Christian faith, from fraternising with the musicians and dancing, clapping and ululating to the music as if it were an ordinary public performance. We recorded religious poems chanted to the accompaniment of a giant harp and the love songs and lyre of a woman who entertained the Amharic nobility of Haile Selassie. In the Danakil Desert we recorded Afar divination trances and flautists making the sounds of hunters in pursuit of oryxes. On the Sudan border we made tapes of finger pianos, gut and wire strung harps, songs praising the beauty of cattle and about resistance to the Islamic Sudanese government and dances with drumming and singing. In Gidole near the Kenya border we op-

erated the tape recorder at the top of a hill while many men danced in clockwise and counter clockwise circles, each playing a different note on a transverse blown flute. The comparative poverty of Ethiopia was such that it was possible to pay all musicians two or three times the going rate.

## YEMEN ARABIA

This was in direct contrast to recording in Sanaa, Yemen Arabia in 1973, where the musicians charged per song and the songs to be recorded were chosen out of a taped session of samples of tracks compressed into a few minutes, condensing introduction, middle and end. Like other popular musicians the three Kawkabani brothers were accustomed to having cassette copies of their recording sessions sell in the soukhs, and knew how to negotiate the best price for the original taping from which such copies were made. It was necessary to prevent their friends from making cassettes of the recording session. This was not to protect the rights which had been purchased for the music recorded but to banish the clicks and rumbles of the friends' equipment. Negotiations over music and money were further complicated by the presence of the charming but ever present representative of the Ministry of Culture, a man who had worked in television in Aden in the neighbouring People's Republic Of Yemen. He took us to his house and showed us the machine guns and bazooka he kept in readiness for possible attacks from enemy factions and other tribes. It was a period when Yemenis were getting rich from migrant labour in Saudi Arabia and sent for musicians to entertain them there. When the Kawkabanis became known for some undiplomatic songs they fell out of favour with the government and are reported to be in exile still in Saudi Arabia.

During each session the musicians and their audience chewed the succulent upper leaves of the stimulant shrub *quat* which they stored in a wad in the cheek so that saliva released the intoxicants. The gatherings were entirely male. My female co-recordist Jessica Mayer, although treated as an honorary male, was taken to meet the musicians' wives in the women's quarters, where they dressed her in their clothes and perfume.

I paid a prominent Sanaa oudh player for four songs and then never used the recordings because I did not consider the music good enough. In the city of Tazewell we identified a musician because he was carrying an *oudh* (lute). We recorded him playing his oudh and singing, accompanied by his brother on double clay drums in the concrete and plaster of a native hotel room. We were pleased to be able to pay him generously because he was a brilliant local entertainer and not part of the Ministry of Information authorised star system. During the early morning of our departure security agents searched our possessions. We disturbed them on our return from breakfast and kept our distance so that they could leave the room by the balcony.

There were two types of ethnic music prevalent at this time: field recordings frequently assembled for ethnomusicological interest rather than as something to listen to, and studio recordings of professional musicians on tour in America and Europe. The wealthiest record companies employed professionals to record musicians in their studios, or to recreate these conditions in the capitals of foreign countries. The emphasis was on world musical traditions in which the performers were trained like Western classical musicians—Turkey, Persia, Egypt, Pakistan, India, Tibet, Bali, Korea, Japan. I decided that it was important to concentrate on



Armed men dancing to a male initiation Asara. Eastern Highlands, Papua New Guinea.

comparatively unknown types of music where neither the musicians, their instruments or the conditions of performance could be transported to a recording studio. I wanted to use field recording as salvage anthropology — to preserve music on tape, particularly kinds of music predating incorporation into the world economy.

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In 1975 Jessica Mayer and I went to live with the Ommura of the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, to carry out fifteen months of anthropological field research for our doctorates. The area had only been come under Australian administrative control in the 1950s. There were old men who could remember the 'stone age' before the introduction of metal tools. Although there was a patrol post with Papua New Guinea police, outbreaks of 'tribal fighting' frequently occurred and all men were armed with bows and arrows. Male and female initiations ('shooting the nose', i.e. perforating the nasal septum) were still performed to socialise youth into their adult re-

sponsibilities. When male initiations were held in the men's house, secret musical instruments were played in the enclosure outside. The initiands inside the men's house, and the women and children who were kept away from the ceremony, were told that the sounds were the cries of actual spirits and great efforts were taken to maintain this illusion. There were a pair of transverse blown bamboo flutes, a water flute, a leaf played to make the sound of a baby crying and bullroarers. I recorded these spirit voices during a ceremony in the middle of the night, crouched down to avoid the swing of the bullroarer which clipped branches off trees. I also recorded many different bamboo jews harp players. This instrument was played by men to make yams grow big and to attract women. Modernists preferred the ukelele. I made cassette tapes of ceremonies, myths and songs which, while of great anthropological importance as texts, were of little interest to those who could not understand the words. I kept the Uher tape recorder used for recording music in a doctor's house in the nearest town so that the batteries could be recharged.

The cost of living in the newly independent Papua New Guinea was higher than that of Australia, the country which had administered it until 1975. Air travel and hotels were extremely expensive but locally grown food and accommodation were cheap in villages.

By reading ethnographies, listening to whatever fragments of New Guinea music were available and by talking to policemen native to the area, I gathered that it was likely that excellent sacred flute and slit gong music was still played in Madang, along the coast and inside the Ramu River. We travelled out from our field site by coffee truck to Goroka, took a plane to Madang, then a small plane to Hatzfeldhaven and a vehicle to Bogia. We explained to the people in the villages that the intention of the recording was to preserve the music and skill of the performers and that copies of the tapes would go to the national sound archives for posterity. Although initiations were no longer performed there were men who could still play the pairs of long transverse blown bamboo flutes. The wooden slit gongs were used to transmit messages like African talking drums. When there



## RECORDING TECHNIQUES

were no roads we would travel in wooden dugout outrigger canoes with carved ancestor figures on the prows. We slept in large houses on stilts with springy pandanus wood floors and high thatched roofs. There were few mosquitoes in the coastal villages, but inland on the Ramu they came down in clouds at night, got under the nets and bit one into a malarial fever.

We took a boat to the active volcano of Manam Island. A coconut fell from its tree dangerously near to Jessica during a recording session. On the two one-week journeys we made to the Ramu we recorded as much music as the flute players were willing to play and slept in the villages. We followed New Guinea custom and paid for all food and shelter when given, to avoid incurring the inflation of a delayed debt. Our fluency in pidgin and knowledge of New Guinea culture made recording much easier because we could talk directly without intermediaries and understand what was going on. On my last recording expedition I took a truck from the Highlands to the Markham Valley and walked up a stream into the Finisterre Range to a village where I recorded bamboo resonating tubes.

I made copies of all the music recorded for the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies in Port Moresby before leaving the country. The fact that some of the music was sacred or secret 'voices of spirits' flute music did not matter as regards these tape transfers. To hear the music on tape was the same as if one was listening at a distance in the village and could not tell whether the sounds were made by supernatural or human agency, so the secrecy was preserved. The Papua New Guinea staff of the Institute spent more time recording in the capital than in the field, and have never shown any interest in the tapes and what they demonstrated about the beauty of the Madang sacred flute music. The New Guinea recordings were done in remote areas, in technically difficult circumstances, of music which had never been comprehensively recorded before as an act of conservation.

All my recordings were made on quarter inch tape at seven and a half ips on a Uher Report Stereo recorder, a cheaper alternative to the Nagra. I used fairly basic stereo microphones before obtaining studio quality ones for the New Guinea recordings. Each pair of microphones was mounted on a bar fastened onto a single tripod. I determined the optimal field of recording by charting an isosceles triangle with its apex at the intersection of the two inward pointing microphone heads. The triangle shape was used to position microphones and musicians. As in the early twentieth century recordings of symphony orchestras made with a single microphone, it was necessary to arrange the musicians so that the quietest were in the foreground and the loudest were at the back. A number of rehearsals were required to check the quality of the sound resulting from these manoeuvres and what the highest level might be. It was vital to instruct spectators not to dance, sing or make any noise that would affect the recording. Wind blowing on microphones or their cables could create problems even with foam rubber baffles. Noises like the stomping of feet could register as vibrations through the earth onto the microphone cables. Random sounds such as loud motorbikes in Sanaa streets, crowing roosters, crying children or a singer clearing his throat could potentially destroy the mood of a piece. In the New Guinea Madang recordings, when the musicians generally performed on the raised platforms of the thatched men's houses, I worried about a sudden tropical rain storm ruining a long flute track. When this once happened it actually added to the ambience.

The atmospherics of recordings made in the field distinguish them from the clean, clinical quality of studio recordings. The context is there, the environment in which the musicians are accustomed to perform. In the background is the characteristic sound of the setting. This might be the sound of the sea, the forest, a density of insects, bird song, the relaxed mood of people playing in a known environment or the gravity of an important ceremony.

## PAYMENTS TO MUSICIANS

I have always paid professional musicians. It is very easy to be generous and pay double or triple the going rate in countries with comparatively low standards of living. The situation is different when people volunteer when they know about the purpose of the recording, or when a collectively owned traditional ceremony is being performed. The most important ethical consideration is to be as explicit as possible about the intention and final outcome to those being recorded. When I taped ceremonies in the New Guinea Highlands villages of my anthropological field research I made contributions of food like a member of the community. I gave refreshments to men who played bamboo jews harps for me. Although I gave money in return for food and shelter, I did not pay the men who played the ancestor cry flutes and slit gongs or singers in the Madang villages. This was both a moral and a cultural decision in that the men of the villages did not ask for payment once the purpose of the recording, to make a record, to preserve the flute playing of the village in the national archives, was explained to them. The sounds of a collectively owned, ancestor given ceremony were being recorded. It was entirely different from material objects being exchanged or another group buying the words, tunes and technology of the ceremony to perform for their own benefit.

An American ethnomusicologist wrote an article suggesting that the most ethical way of dealing with the problem of payment to performers of field recordings was to assign the record royalty percentage directly to them in the contract. While this solution is simple and direct, it does not engage with the realities of the ethnic music market made from field recordings, in which one thousand records may sell very slowly over a period of a decade. In the case of a record made entirely of music by one performer a tiny royalty payment would have to be transmitted every six months, in a form diminished by bank charges, so that it could be converted into the national currency of the musician. Where the record involved performance by sev-



Recording techniques of another age: unknown Asante drummer recorded by Captain Rattray, 1917.

eral musicians or numbers of groups of several musicians, the apportioning of ever diminishing shares of a minimal sum becomes administratively impossible and of diminishing material benefit. If the musicians receive a comparatively large sum of local currency at the time of recording, then they can use this immediately to purchase something of consequence. The notion that it is possible to contact the kinds of musicians I have recorded through the post twice yearly with royalty payments amounting to one or two pounds before banker's draft and currency conversion charges have been deducted, or that the musicians have the means to negotiate these mechanisms of payment, is totally unrealistic.

Obviously if there was a situation in which the sale or licensing of records was so great that it generated royalties of thousands of pounds then there would be a strong case to locate the musicians and distribute this money equitably. This has never happened with records of field recordings I have made. The largest amount I have ever received was a thousand pounds for the unauthorised use of tracks from several records on the soundtrack of a documentary series on the history of anthropology. I discovered this by watching a repeat showing on television. By this time the production company was in profit having sold the documentary all over the world, including the USA and Japan.

I have never been directly paid for the hours that it took to make the recordings or the time to select tracks for records, prepare master tapes and write record notes. I paid for all of the expenses of field recording including equipment, travel costs and payments to musicians out of personal money or student grants to study subjects other than ethnomusicology. I have never recovered the recording equipment costs, travel expenses, payment to musicians and master tape production studio costs from the royalties received from records or from non-record use.

### CONTRACTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS

The 'standard contract' for a record of field recorded ethnic music consists of a percentage royalty for each disc, less expenses, which is halved for overseas exports and a fifty-fifty split for royalties from non-record use. If an advance is offered it is unlikely to pay for anything more than the costs of preparing the tape masters, photographic material, notes and the registered airmail postage that the lessor is required to provide at his own expense by the terms of the contract. The lengthier contracts which are derived from from popular music agreements often transfer responsibility as regards litigation over rights to the field recordist, even in instances where this results from the

activities of the record company. Because records of ethnic music have comparatively small sales they do not generate the amounts of revenue to pay for the hiring of lawyers. This means that litigation is largely limited to letters between the recordist and the record company.

The recordist trusts that the record company will use the masters, photographs and notes to make the best product possible given their resources. If something goes wrong - for example, if a recording credit is left out or they colour the record cover red - nothing can be done until the relevant release has sold out to the point of reissue.

I have tried to record as much information as possible for posterity when I have written the notes for records.

In the 1970s Ralph Harrison and I issued the record *Musiques Ethiopiennes* as OCORA 75 on the O.R.T.F. French Radio Television label, Ocora. The customary contract with a percentage royalty rate and non-record use percentage was signed.

It was obvious that the record was being reprinted because of gradations in the green background of the LP cover during the 1970s, when Rastafarian reggae was popular. Every few years I would write letters requesting information about sales and receive no reply. In the 1990s I was sent a letter by

Ocora with numbers of sales dating back to the time in the 1990s when Ocora had been transferred from the broadcasting company O.R.T.F. and turned into a separate company at the same address. At half year intervals Ocora would send sales figures for the previous six months. However it took several years before they paid the several hundred pounds owed as royalties by the new company by transferring them to a UK bank account. They do not reply to letters, will not acknowledge almost a decade of unpaid royalties and will not provide sales figures for this period.

## ABUSES OF AGREEMENTS AND FIELD RECORDINGS

The worst thing that they did was to re-release Ocora 75 *Musiques Ethiopiennes* as a double CD combined with the record of Ethiopian polyphonic music made by the late recordist Jean Jenkins. We were never consulted about this despite the fact that Ocora always had a viable address on the original contract and on letters sent previously enquiring about royalties. When five complementary copies of the incongruously combined CDs arrived in the post, it took me a while to make a dreadful discovery. The CD booklet had an introduction by an ethnomusicologist chum of the Ocora Director in which he referred to myself and my co-recordist in the past tense as 'sounds hunters.' To create space for his analytic self-praise Ocora had eliminated the one thing of lasting value from the notes. These were the beautifully accurate translations of the

words of the Amharic love songs and religious poems which had been made by Ezra Tseghai.

Ocora not only refused to provide royalty statements or to reply to letters, they never consulted us about the assignation of rights. Peter Gabriel liked an accordion and drum song recorded in a *tej beit* in the Addis Ababa slums and used it, after minor studio modification, as part of the soundtrack he composed for Scorsese's *The Last Temptation Of Christ*, the film about Jesus [soundtrack released as *Passion*]. It was used on the record of the soundtrack providing the foundation of the music and as a recognisable track on the record *Passion Sources*. It took a long time to discover that this borrowing had occurred, although the arrangement had been made by negotiation with Ocora. I saw the film on television and discovered that the *tej beit* music is heard as Jesus observes Mary Magdalene having sex with her foreign merchant clients.

The Peter Gabriel compilation record was subsequently used as a source of ethnic music for documentary film makers. One evening I was listening to a BBC Radio 4 dramatisation of a Nawal el Sadawi novel about the exploitation of an Egyptian woman by men. The woman suffered a violent rape and the soundtrack played the Ethiopian *tej beit* track from the Peter Gabriel compilation. Each time the heroine was sexually assaulted in the play, the *tej beit* track appeared in the sound track. This repetition of context and sound created the impression that the music represented male sexual violence, that it was musical rape. I wrote

to Radio 4 and complained on behalf of the Ethiopian musicians whose music had been used to signal rape in the dramatisation of an Egyptian novel. The producer Ann Edyvène wrote back stating that she could not see what my objections were to the artistic justification of this use. Besides, Peter Gabriel's record company had given Radio 4 permission to use the track so it was totally legal.

The act of field recording led me to wonderful music in the most exotic of settings. I ceased going on expeditions when it was no longer possible to subsidise the expenses from student grants given to support other study.

I am convinced that it was a good thing to have made tapes of this music. Provided that the tracks are not unnaturally edited and the liner notes contain as many details as possible about the musicians and music, the records serve as evidence of expertise. The musicians cease to be unknown and can be located.

There are parallels with the recording of Amerindian cultures by Americans and Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century. They had the enthusiasm to document native American life with the knowledge that some aspects existed only as memory and that it was undergoing rapid social change even as they wrote it all down. In later decades they were criticised for being unscientific, for glorifying tradition, for exploiting the Amerindians by publicising their lore, for purchasing information cheaply under the guise of friendship. One hundred years later, Amerindians consult these accounts to find out about tribal life, because these are the only written accounts.

In an imperfect world actions may be imperfect, but just as it is right to try to save the life of an individual it is right to try to record and preserve music.

RAGNAR JOHNSON

### Records (Recordings, Notes and Photographs)

- 1972 *Ethiopian Urban and Tribal Music: Mindanoo Mistiru*, Lyricord Discs, NY, LLST 7243.
- 1972 *Ethiopian Urban and Tribal Music: Gold from Wax*, Lyricord Discs, NY, LLST 7244.
- 1973 *Musiques Ethiopiennes*, OCORA, O.R.T.F., Paris, France, OCORA 75.
- 1975 *Music from Yemen Arabia: Sanaani, Laheji, Adeni*, Lyricord Discs, NY, LLST 7283.
- 1975 *Music from Yemen Arabia: Samar*, Lyricord Discs, NY, LLST 7284.
- 1978 *Sacred Flute Music from New Guinea: Madang*, Quartz Publications, London, Quartz 001.
- 1979 *Windim Mambu: Sacred Flute Music from New Guinea Madang, Volume 2*, Quartz Publications, London, Quartz 002.
- 1994 *Ethiopie Musiques Vocales et Instrumentales*, OCORA Radio France, Paris, France, OCORA 0580056.



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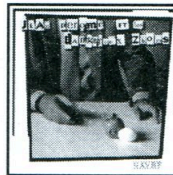
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# Shopping expedition

'Monomaniac listener' **EVAN PARKER** leads us down the stairs into his favourite record shop and butters up the manager to get a cheap deal on some ethnic recordings.

The roots are where the branches used to be, but now the roots are where roots should be — below ground.

To explain: Ray's Jazz Shop, now in Shaftesbury Avenue/Monmouth Street, started for me as Collett's Folk And Jazz Record Shop just over the road in New Oxford Street. In those days, probably for very sound dialectical reasons, the jazz department was in the basement. You had to walk half-way through the ground floor folk department to some stairs on your right and walk down to the empire of Ray. Ray was a modernist, Ray could get American imports. Ray had Coltrane's *Favourite Things* on Atlantic import with the thick cardboard sleeve and US cutting level — always higher in those days — which gave you a higher music-to-noise ratio, essential if your record player wasn't quite as hi-fi as you would have liked it to be. Ray had this record at least 18 months before the English licensed version came out. Something to do with copyright control on the Julie Andrews version and the high business of West End musicals holding up the license.

How to describe the intense emotions I relive remembering that cold wet December evening (1960?) when I went to buy my copy, feverish with excitement having read a review in *Downbeat* which said that at one point Coltrane seemed to be playing two lines at once? — anyway, forget biscuits dipped in tea. So intense is this memory that I am no longer sure whether this was the first time I ever went to the shop. The other big memory from back then is overhearing a customer describe a track from Don Ellis's *How Time Passes* (an LP on Candid — even thicker cardboard for those sleeves) as 'a diatribe to sodomy'. I had a rough idea what sodomy was but I had to go home and look up the word

diatribe — an early introduction to the sophisticated language music criticism can inspire. Even the shop's connections with the Communist Party made it exotic, almost dangerous. We took the *Daily Express* in my house and I was just beginning to realise that it might not be the only way of seeing things. Anyway, this was where I bought my records. It was important that Ray seemed to prefer 'Modern Jazz', as we called it then.

For years I would walk through the upstairs without looking right or left, gaze focused on the turn to the right and the stairs. On the way out eyes straight ahead for the door — get the bag home, get those records on. There was a kind of monomaniac quality to my listening that allowed for no deviation.

One day several years on I looked right on the way out, and saw a 10-inch LP with a colour photograph of an African holding two small stones over five much larger stones. (I think by this time I knew *Dahomey Dance*, *Dakar* and most decisively *Africa Brass* — I was going to have to know more about African music in order to know more about Coltrane.) That record was Ocora 16, *Musique Cabre Du Nord Congo*, the stones were a pitched percussion instrument called lithophone in musicologese.

I started to collect field recordings of African music and slowly my interest widened to include anything that looked interesting. John Stevens played me the Dagar Brothers, we discovered Gagaku together (the Lyricord record), hence Spontaneous Music Ensemble's record *Karyobin*. When I met Han Bennink we did collective research for new stuff, new labels. All the records that came out with UNESCO support were potentially interesting.

In sequence over the next twenty years Colletts moved across the way to Shaftesbury Avenue/Monmouth Street. The ground floor was half folk, half jazz, Ray was at ground level and you could walk from one department to the other without using stairs. Then the Colletts business started to shrink, Ray took over the Jazz Shop in his own right and the folk department moved across to the basement of the Colletts bookshop in Charing Cross Road. With the demise of the Soviet Union everything changed at Colletts and while Ray's Jazz Shop, as it is now known, went from strength to strength, for a good while London was without a shop really dedicated to folk and so-called 'ethnic music'. All this changed eighteen months ago when a minor miracle occurred: Ray opened up the basement as a new department, 'Blues And Roots,' specialising once again in blues and folk music from all over the world.

Mike Gavin, the manager of this shop within a shop, explained his thinking to me: 'The idea is to provide a space where people who want to touch base with recorded roots music can do so, a resource for students of the history of these musics, a place where people can bathe in unlikely sounds and combinations of sound, and a forum for enthusiasts.' There is a return to the tradition of being allowed to listen before you buy, with the added advantage that Mike has a very high quality playback system on permanent loan from Musical Images, the hi-fi dealer just a few doors away in Monmouth Street.

'My interest in music is partly inspired by my interest in history and mythology. I felt there was a need for a place that gave space to the recorded origins of contemporary music — the archetypes, thus 'Blues And Roots.' Where all this links up with the Colletts

tradition I'm not sure, but there is a rightness about the continued use of the space for this music. Lawrence Durrell called it 'spirit of place.' The folksy/political thing has gone, as has the innocence of the early folklorists. CDs are here and provide the increased profit margin that allows record companies to pour out new and reissued recordings at an alarming rate. Nobody can keep up with all of it, so I see part of my function is as a crap filter. I suppose as the crap flies thicker every day this is the most anyone can hope for — in life as much as in retail!

Mike and his philosophy are precisely what makes a shop like Blues And Roots preferable to the anonymity of the retail chains: he knows not only the music he stocks very well, but he also gets to know his customers personally and can bring the stuff he knows they will be interested in to their attention. Also because he has shown such commitment to the field he represents, he is looked on very favourably by distributors and is able to carry in stock complete catalogues. This favoured status shows up perhaps best of all in his representation of the Ocora label, where he has in stock not only all the current CD material but also many LP and cassette versions of collections which are officially out of print — brand new but at very reduced prices.

Reduced prices — a subject that I get quite excited about: there is also second hand and ex-review stock at prices that make it possible to take a chance on something that might otherwise seem too risky. I am very happy to have picked up some of the fantastic Nimbus world music series in this way, and I am now totally convinced by what they are doing, especially in the field of Indian music, where the wedding of Nimbus's 'no-editing' philosophy and coherent sound-field recording technique with the ideal long performances of single raags (typically 70 or more minutes) is a marriage made in heaven for me. Although the late Michael Gerzon, a recording engineer and music enthusiast, had been raving to me about this series for several years, it was through Blues And Roots that I finally bought them.



The range of authentic folk musics on CD is now vast and it really is hard to keep up. The CDs listed below jumped out as being mostly recent releases of great interest, and are just a small sample from the huge number of CDs of this type which Mike has in stock. This is the place.

EVAN PARKER

*Shopping list:*

Cameroon: *Baka Pygmy Music*, AUDIVIS D8029 [Music for the Buma dance; Hut Song; 'Oryterope Et Pangolin' sung fable; Song for gathering mushrooms; Song to attract game; Music for the Nganga dance; Lullaby; The Water Drum; The Humming of the Bees]. Recorded 1975. *Aka Pygmy Music*, AUDIVIS D8054 [Mongombi (shouts uttered while hunting with nets); Anduwa (song performed during the return from a hunt); Dikoboda Sombe (hut song); Bosobe (song and dance of a diviner-healer); Bobangi (song to celebrate the catching of game); Balibo Sasasa (children's round dance); Mbola (adult song performed by children)]. Recorded 1971.

Japan: *Ainu Songs*, AUDIVIS D8047 [Upopop; Upopo; Iyuta-upopo; Rimse; Upopo; Horippa; Kamuy-yukar; Yukar; Sinotcha Segue Tus; Yaysama; Chis-sinotcha; Ihumke.]. Recorded 1978.

Turkey: *Sacred Chants Of Anatolia*, OCORA C580057 [Ah! How Feeble Our Sighs!; The Ill Deeds Of This Bloodthirsty Cruel Man; Sing Not, Nightingale, Sing Not; He, My Light Is A Full Moon Among The Saints; I Was Born To Lead The World Along The Straight Path; You Must Not Set A Trap For A Lover; If My Body Were Cut To Pieces; Come Companions, Let Us Unite; The King Of Men Has Gone Into Ecstasy; I Went Into The Mountain; In This World A Light Shone Forth; If You Are Asked About Doctrine; The Banquet Of The Forty; The Dance Of The Grey Steed; I Was Shemsi Sultan; The Sacred Crown Of Freedom.]. Recorded 1971.

*Polyphonies Vocales Des Pygmees Mbenzele*, INEDIT W260042.

Ivory Coast: *A Senufo-Fodonon Funerary Vigil*, AUDIVIS 8203.

Tanzania: *Chants Des Wagogo Et Des Kuria*, INEDIT W260041.

Mongolia: *Vocal And Instrumental Music*, INEDIT W260009

Turkey: *Archives Of Turkish Music, Vols 1 & 2*, OCORA C560081&2.

Java: *Sunda Country-Art Music 1*, OCORA C580064.

Uzbekistan: *Turgun Alimatov*, OCORA C560086.

Indonesia: *Madura Art Music*, OCORA C560083.

*Musiques De La Toundra Et La Taigra (URSS)*, INEDIT W260019.

Blues And Roots, in the basement at Ray's Jazz Shop,  
180 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8JS.  
Tel: 0171 240 3969.

# Review feature:

# Interactive Uproar

## Various

### *Relay III: Random Play*

#### 2:13 Music CD 001

Relay — described by the organisers as 'a batonless impro circuit' — has become an annual event at the Stoke Newington Festival in North London. *Random Play* is the first time it has been transformed into recorded product. At 2.13pm on Sunday 18 June 1995, three trios started playing. One in a tiny, sweltering tent pitched in a park, another in a library gallery, and a third in a Church Hall. After ten minutes, four more musicians joined the circuit: on the arrival of one of these, a playing musician would leave and carry on to another site, and in turn oust another. This process went on for three hours. *Random Play* selects sixty-five minutes from the nine hours recorded on that day. We are given thirty-four snippets and advised to use the 'random play' button on the CD player.

What then is the status of this digital data lasered onto plastic: document or commodity? What do the musicians hope to gain from this release? Improvisers are a strange breed. Bitterly opposed to any administrator or critic who might fetter their artistic autonomy, they are also desperate to be noted and named: the sociopath spleen of the biblical prophet spliced with manic careerism. Recordings are scorned as the mere residue of the "real" event, yet the way the straight music press neglects Free Improvisation is deemed a criminal victimisation. The free improviser is a shaman of absolute freedom — who also craves the adulation and money squandered on the mediocrities who smarm their way to the fleshpots of corporate promotion and South Bank billings. The contradiction is blatant — a point frequently made by such apologists of the *status quo* as arts-funding bureaucrats, clubland *mafiosi* and record-company honchos.

However, blaming the free improviser for this contradiction is like blaming the poor for poverty: it refuses to consider either the social totality in which the problem arises or the historical processes that brought things to such a pass. The musicians solace themselves with conventional ideologies of art, which bless the contradiction with a litany of martyrs: Van Gogh, Albert Ayler, Joe Harriott. But posthumous approbation is as *ersatz* as the heavenly afterlife promised to an ignorant peasantry in the Dark Ages. The authentic free improviser clamours for attention *now*.

The improviser's contradictory attitude towards fame and success is not wilful: it is the result of a contradiction in society. Mass communication has been monopolised by capital, the most hierarchical and dictatorial form of property yet devised. Under capitalism, to attempt to speak the truth to many people entails paradoxes conformist commonsense cannot handle. You want to speak to everyone, but you cannot do so through the means of exploitation.



Relay III: in action

Free Improvisation sustains itself by its unfashionable commitment to musical Truth. It has formed an international network: musicians who reckon to know what has been done with music in history, who refuse the easy returns of comfortable repetition, who seek the *never-before-heard*. Although the ideologues of Ambient have tried to justify a notion of music as private and non-interactive as literature, thus submitting to the economic imperative of the prerecorded commodity, free improvisers are committed to the unique alchemy of live performance: a materialist insistence on what music can do with an audience in real time.

Here terminology can be a problem, as some musicians refer to what happens in a live performance as 'spirit,' antithetical to the 'materialism' of crowd-pleasing and commercial calculation. However, as Frank Zappa was fond of pointing out, music is the movement of material air molecules and visceral matter. Talk of 'spiritual' values actually voices impatience with verbal reason: in defending inarticulacy, it falls back into a vagueness belied by the precision of the playing. Coltrane and Ayler talked "spirituality," but what they played was demonstrably a technical advance. However much the verbals coincide, materialists hold a respect for Coltrane and Ayler which they deny to, say, New Age product. The truth of music may be hard to verbalise, but resort to fairytales is not the answer. Talk of spirit reveals a poverty of vision: a failure to discern the potential of the mundane world.

The strength of *Relay* is that it foregrounds that potential. Taking Free Improvisation to the revellers of the Stoke Newington Festival evinces a utopian populism that is the opposite of commercial collusion. Since its inception, Free Improvisation has been fraught with class tension: who to appeal to with this music? The terms of the argument have a familiar ring to those who have engaged in revolutionary politics or the thrills of Marxist critique: our ideas are so beyond anything happening among the 'mass,' maybe we should just appeal to the elite? Though it will offend the Anarchism of many musicians, Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* remains the crucial text.

In Free Improvisation, class struggle manifests itself in a quandary: whether to present the music as a form for 'refined' listeners, one that deserves arts sponsorship, or to flog the stuff through the channels dug by mass desires for blues and funk and dance and noise. No one should be castigated for trying to make gigs happen — any raid on arts funds is to be encouraged — but lack of preciousness is nevertheless a plus. *Relay III: Random Play* shows this: chamber moments abound, but a rowdy populism widens the socio-sonic palette.

Conceptual Art attempts to reveal the extraordinary nature of urban actuality: a critique of the narrow-minded arrogance of the usual formats for art and their attempt to monopolise cultural value. *Relay* works like that. The actual 'concert' was impossible for any single individual to hear, while the arrival of breathless musicians from other sites created a bizarre awareness of geographic simultaneity. You felt as if you were hearing a whole locality in interactive uproar. On the disc, the 'roomy' quality of the recordings encourages an open-ended sense of event that complements such spatial imaginings.

*Relay III's* 'random play' idea is not new. Gary Davis's collection of John Cage tributes in 1993, *A Chance Operation* (Koch 3-7238-2 Y6x2) used it, for example. However, in comparison with such American high-art cool, *Relay III's* chance is a ragged punk scramble, touching and explosive in turns. The 'randomness' of the post-Cagean aesthetic — its intent to abolish 'linear' thought, to usher in a pseudo-democracy of non-hierarchical 'let it be' — is actually window-dressing for a complacent liberalism: 'modernism has



Ivor Kallin

shattered our bourgeois world-picture, so we'll just play with the pieces.' Even when set on 'random play,' *Relay III* does not sound like that. It has urgency and grit and a raw, undefended beauty.

Sarah Allen's flute and Ivor Kallin's violin frequently wash into deep blue melancholia; Maggie Nicols sings long sad notes that catch the throat; Eddie Prevost's intimate rattles are suddenly most moving.

Yet you never feel manipulated. Emotive figures are found in process, not triggered ad-style to loosen our grip on our banknotes.

Charles Hayward was drumming up a storm that Sunday, a splotched funk miles from the antiseptic corridors of post-Cagean 'experiment.' Likewise, Alan Wilkinson is as ludicrously comical as he is technically innovative, always finding noises that have never come out of a horn before. Caroline Kraabel's alto and voice swoop down in long lines that haunt. There are miraculously intense fidgety scratch-fests from John Bisset's guitar and lovely poised twangs from John Edwards's bass.



Although the ideologues of Ambient have tried to justify a notion of music as private and non-interactive as literature, thus submitting to the economic imperative of the prerecorded commodity, free improvisers are committed to the unique alchemy of live performance: a materialist insistence on what music can do with an audience in real time.

It is probably perverse to love this music, with its clatterings, chatterings and ridiculous dynamic range (listeners who have neighbours will be jumping up and down to adjust the volume). A London-based listener could be accused of partiality and chauvinism for a particular 'scene' (hell, the back of my head appears in one of the photos on the lavish 20-page b&w booklet!). If I wanted to demonstrate to a non-initiate how this music really works, I would still rather take them to see it live. However, the simultaneous embrace of accident and passion on *Relay III* is a terrific clinch, one too often frozen-out by the covert puritanism of too much 'avant-garde' music. Open-field aleatorics do not suppress the urge to swing and rock and boogie: abandonment of romantic individualism does not mean the sacrifice of concrete utterance. These players thrive on the accidental because they mind about the condition of ordinary things and people, not because they want a high-class emptiness. An avant-garde that barks at snobs: a recipe for commercial disaster, but a tonic for the progressive listener.

BEN WATSON



Caroline Kraabel

## Relay III

Available from: I, Macaulay House,  
Woodlea Road, Stoke Newington,  
London, N16 0TR.

Maggie Nicols



32 RESONANCE

John Edwards

Random  
Play

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(L-R) Li Chia Sheng Hong Kong composer, John Zorn, Eye, taken after Guangzhou concert.

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## COMPETITION

# JOHN ZORN/ YAMANTAKA EYE 100 CD SET TO BE WON!

- **To enter this competition:** Create a new work using the Stock, Hausen & Walkman samples (at the end of the CD with this issue) as source material. **You need not have a sampler to enter this competition!** Lo-tech or no-tech innovations are welcomed and indeed encouraged. *Resonance* will, with permission, include the best entries (or extracts therefrom) on the free CD due to be issued with the next issue of the magazine.
- Send your entry on a DAT, cassette or CD to *Resonance*, LMC, Unit B1, Lafone House, 11-13 Leathermarket St, London SE1 3HN.
- The prize will be awarded to the entry the editors consider to be the best. The editors' decision is final. Members of Stock, Hausen and Walkman and the *Resonance* editorial/ production team are not eligible to enter. The closing date for entries is January 31st 1996.
- The winner will be announced in the next issue of *Resonance*.
- The 100CD is due for release by Sound Factory in February 1997 and the winner will receive the set as soon as practicable after this date.

## George Graewe

Chamber Music 1990-92

RANDOM ACOUSTICS RA 003 CD

There was once a convention that improvised music was loud all the time, and that everyone played non-stop — a convention all the stronger for being unconsciously followed. The result was that a style of free playing quickly asserted itself, ironic in that the music was inspired by the idea of freedom from convention. I used to wonder if there would ever come a time when someone would be silent for a while.

The music on this CD shows what can happen when someone takes control of improvisers: the players are straitjacketed and can get nothing done. The first track consists of the band working in every possible duo permutation eleven times. When I say that it lasts thirteen minutes, you will realise that no one gets to stretch out. In view of what these musicians could do if left to their own devices, I'm not convinced that Graewe's use of them is justified.

I have no objection in principle to composers using improvisers, though I'm rarely keen on the results. I don't think improvisers need composers. If it's to work, it needs a composer with a personality strong enough to provide something that compensates for the players' loss of autonomy. Failing that, all the composer does is constrain; which is what I hear on this CD. The music gets nowhere, and every phrase sounds like the dying fall of something. I find it cold and academic.

**WILL MONTGOMERY**

**RICHARD LEIGH**

## Roof

*The Untraceable Cigar*

RED NOTE 14 CD

I was lucky to see Roof perform at the Nicklesdorf Festival (Austria) in July. They are very visual: Luc Ex with his low-slung bass and exaggerated bobbing and weaving; Tom Cora's calm, almost classical pose; Phil Minton tearing into the microphone and living his characters; Michael Vatcher with his huge grin towering over the kit, swatting both space and drums. It was sonically stunning as well.

A prior conversation with Cora had primed me to the fact that the band play 'songs,' but not what they would sound like. For me, composing for improvisers is a difficult process, in that the changes from composed to improvised seem unnatural and do not suit the musicians. What was apparent at the gig is the ease with which the musicians negotiate these changes — well captured on the CD.

The orchestration is wonderful. Cello (arco and pizz) works very well with plectrum-plucked bass guitar (imagine a meeting of Pete Hook and Colin Hodgkinson). Luc Ex and Michael Vatcher make a great 'rhythm section'. On 'Makarian Waterhole' and 'Sage In Doubt' they go into deconstructed punk/funk grooves. Lovely unison passages of cello and voice can be heard on the folksy 'Janna Lied' or again on the lyrical 'Sage In Doubt.' On 'The Trace' there is stunning interplay between voice and drums.

The timing of the musicians is always immaculate, and changes in dynamics are handled expertly. Intense dark soundscapes work just as well as quiet spacious sections.

For me the ideal situation is where the group sound is fully integrated, but at the same time the individual vocabulary of the musicians shines through. All this is evident here, alongside a classic example of the integration of composition with improvisation.

**PHIL DURRANT**

## Badland

Badland

BRUCE'S FINGERS BF 14

Two versions of an Ornette Coleman tune, 'Sadness,' bookend this set from a trio comprising Mark Sanders on drums, Simon Fell on bass, and Simon Rose on sax. An irresistible tune, it provides a neat frame for some impressive group improvisations from a well-matched trio. Sanders is one of the most exhilarating drummers in the country (versatile as they come and lamentably under-recorded). Throughout the album his swirling openness and drive are at the heart of the band's endeavours. On the version of Ellington's 'Come Sunday' he is quiet and inventive behind Rose's gentle playing. At other times he is able, without a hint of thrash, to unleash immense energies in the music. On a piece like the storming 'Hynena's Finger' track he stokes up the fires to prodigious levels. Fell is full of ideas here too, fast, but not just fast, preserving a keen ear at speed. His solo on 'Blue Tern' is a terrific piece of pent-up force, which hits the ground running when the other two join in. Rose's playing is rough-toned and dynamic. It's a vocal approach, emotional and ringing with conviction. He's economical with his playing but makes his points forcefully.

Phil Minton takes the Roof off



# This Heat

## *Made Available: John Peel Sessions* THESE 10 CD

This CD comprises two sessions made for BBC Radio in 1977 by the most interesting British rock band to emerge in the late '70s. The first features versions of three pieces from This Heat's eponymous debut LP, and is familiarly great: tight playing, intelligent composition, a certain violence. The second session, recorded six months later, is moodier, more introspective; the one song here, "Makeshift," finds Charles Hayward singing like Johnny Rotten inside a Dalek — great fun then, quaintly excruciating now. Though they absorbed its effect (along with influences as diverse as Magma and Augustus Pablo), This Heat rehearsed too much and soundchecked for too long to be mistaken for punk. What they shared with that tendency was the impatient mood of the times and the fact that they were featured on the John Peel Show, which quite as much as the London pop papers defined punk nationally in a way that no number of concerts in the capital ever did. In concert This Heat were ordinarily extremely loud, and their use of volume remains an aspect of their work that no studio or domestic hi-fi could reproduce. A concert at *Heaven* where they were the 'support' act joyfully left the audience pretty much deaf to the ridiculous *Tuxedo Moon* and the twaddly *Plastics*. This Heat did real damage, were undomesticated and independent: the punk bands in comparison were homely, juvenile and attention-seeking, while the artier groups just didn't work hard enough.

The members of the group had been around a bit, in *Radar Favourites* and elsewhere. So were they actually progressive rock? or new wave? Even at the time, they were problematic and ahead of the field.

By about 1980 This Heat's place in things seemed more tangible, at least in London. Other groups using the Cold Storage studio — Milk From Cheltenham, Murphy Federation, L.Voag/Atom of Doubt, Lowest Note On The Organ — seemed momentarily

to form a coherent London underground of volatile and ground-breaking rock, with This Heat its centre and gaining the most recognition. By early 1982 the rapid shifts in the musical and social landscape, whereby access to venues in London seemed to disappear — along with the will to experiment, the interest of the very few journalists and the audience, meant all had changed. Peel soon moved on to *Altered Images*, and became fixated on *The Fall*. The punters were busy buying records by The Police, Dire Straits, the Stiff Records bunch, other assorted crap. This Heat split up.

What's remarkable even now is the confidence the group had in its own material — 'Makeshift,' which here sounds perfectly in place with the other tracks, wasn't released till 1981 on *Deceit*, by which time it had become an integral piece of an album focussed on lies, distortion and contemporary politics (same thing, right, but those were less cynical times).

That sense of certainty and direction, combined with a clarity of thought and a meticulous attention to musical detail makes these recordings still sound pretty fresh. Like most sessions, this CD is primarily for committed fans or completists rather than those new to the band. In contradistinction to many such releases, the featured group were genuinely important and their development certainly merits attention.

**ED BAXTER**



This Heat: fresh

## Joe Maneri Quartet

*Let The Horses Go*  
LEO LR 232

Joe Maneri,  
Joe Morris,  
Mat Maneri

*Three Men Walking*  
ECM 1597

Saxophone and clarinet player Joe Maneri is a true original, and consequently so is his music. Arriving in the public eye as if from outer space at the age of sixty something, he has been around for donkey's years. John Zorn is apparently releasing a recording of him playing a hybrid of Klezmer and jazz from the '50s, long preceding the current trends in New York. Having absorbed the microtonal music of Europe, and mastered Greek, Arabic and Eastern European folk forms, Maneri made a living playing at weddings. This is what informs his own music (he recognises 72 microtones in an octave, and that's no bull!). Resident in Boston since 1970, where he lectures in music at the New England Conservatory, much of his musical activity centres on the laidback ambience of his own home.



Joe Maneri: lovable

The Leo release features Maneri's regular quartet, with son Mat on violin, John Lockwood on bass and Randy Peterson on drums, a group which was a great success at the 1996 Unsung Music Festival on London's South Bank. This is a group which has obviously played together over some years, and once you get past the rather pretentious individual quotes of the sleeve notes — the drummer in particular goes on about his use of the 'hidden clave' — this CD is full of great music. All players turn in fine performances, Mat Maneri the perfect foil to his father, following every twist and nuance while retaining his own voice in what amounts to a very integrated group music.

The ECM release, as the title suggests, is a trio featuring son Mat once more and another Boston resident, the guitarist Joe Morris. The music is again intimate and of a high quality, but spoils somewhat by that ECM glossy sound and the fact that (I understand) the musicians had less control over what was chosen from the session.

The overriding feature of this predominantly improvised music is that it is slow, sometimes very slow, without ever becoming turgid. There is the sense of a real musical intelligence, sensitivity and, dare I say it, love at work here. Maneri likes to greet his audiences by saying, "We play this music because we love you." It's easy to be cynical about such sentiments, but I for one believe him.

**ALAN WILKINSON**

## Paul Schütze

*New Maps Of Hell*

**BIG CAT ABB 104**

Paul Schütze

*New Maps Of Hell 2: The Rapture Of Metals*

**BIG CAT ABB 105**

Paul Schütze

*Site Anubis*

**BIG CAT ABB 106**

*Site Anubis* is the third release in Schütze's *Pacific Unrest* trilogy. Picking up where Miles Davis's electrified jazz fusions left off in the mid 70s, Schütze specialises in electronic/ambient, larval biorhythms informed by millennial angst. The previously hard-to-find *New Maps Of Hell* (1992) and *The Rapture Of Metals* (1993) are parts one and two of the series, and are here re-edited and re-mastered. *The Rapture* is a solo recording, while *New Maps* and *Site Anubis* are ostensibly group efforts, but on each disc Schütze's treatments subsume the group effort into an instantly recognizable Schützeian soundscape. Schütze is, after all, composer, producer, engineer, and principle musician (keyboards, percussion, tapes, and samplers) on these recordings.

On *New Maps* the accompanying sextet is percussion-heavy, though each of his contributors (bass, guitar, and trombone are also featured) are caught up and borne along on the mercurial currents of his music like corpuscles in his bloodstream. It's hard

to discern the limits of Schütze's personal contributions, to trace the contours of the shapes the others throw up. This is a difficulty hardly clarified by his solo work on *The Rapture*, which is itself remarkable in its textural density.

All the more remarkable then, that on *Site Anubis* the individual voices of his new group, Phantom City, should be so strong when the recording process was one of Chinese whispers. Each member recorded their entire contribution alone, playing along to tapes passed on from one to the next, the music gaining density by accretion until Schütze claimed the tapes back to do his own hermetic work. There's only one other drummer here (Pablo's Eye's Dirk Wachtelaer), and he is perhaps the star turn in a killer lineup alongside Bill Laswell (bass), Krakatoa's Raoul Bjorkenheim (guitar), Lol Coxhill (soprano sax), 16/17's Alex Buess (bass clarinets), and veteran Herbie Hancock associate Julian Priester (trombone).

**TIM OWEN**

## Nick Smith & Mark Wastell

*Collision Duo*

**FRONT 01 cassette**

String instruments blend together easily, hence the great orchestral sections; a fact successfully exploited by improvising groups such as Arcado, ARC and the European Chaos String Quintet. Without instrumental conflict to deal with, one can focus simply on what to play and why (questions which should be addressed in that order).

Nick Smith (violin) and Mark Wastell (cello) are new names to me and, in the absence of sleeve notes, I only have the music to go on. Given the expressive capacity of their instruments, they studiously avoid expressionism — if one succumbs, the other's off somewhere else. Are they yet to resolve why they play what they do (does anyone ever fully resolve it?); or are they intent on a Cageian impersonality? I suspect the former because, despite eschewing lyricism, they create a warm, friendly music. If it lacks pivotal moments of drama, tension, rhythmic or dynamic

turns, it is nevertheless consistently good, indicating a high level of improvisatory skills. It unfolds in a smooth organic flow, and the end result is satisfaction rather than disturbance.

**GUS GARSIDE**

*Front 01 is available from Confront Recordings, 14B Lascotts Road, London N22 4JN, @ £5 inc postage.*

## General Strike

### *Danger In Paradise* PIANO 503 CD

First released on limited edition cassette, as one of the early releases by Touch over ten years back *Danger in Paradise* actually sounds much older than that, like something Joe Meek would have recorded when everyone had gone home. This became my favourite bathtime listening immediately

and several tracks would always turn up on compilations made for friends, but why oh why was it only available on goddamn cassette? Well now twelve years later it's finally re-released on CD by David Cunningham's re-animated Piano label, you know, the one responsible for putting out the first This Heat album way back when. Well, better late than never but strangely this doesn't seem late, it seems quite a timely release bearing in mind the flood of Martin Denny re-releases and interest in exotica that seems to have gripped the record industry. Not to say this is anything to do with that. This record is much more convincing: recorded between '79 and '81, it's totally anti-rock and has a curious Heath Robinson hand-made-machine-like quality to it — but it's nowhere near as deliberately irritating as the Flying Lizards and it's got Steve Beresford and David Toop playing some charmingly

ridiculous versions of Sun Ra tunes, with the joyful chants of 'We travel the spaceways' redone by a chorus of Prozac Zombies who still haven't worked out why exactly they travel from planet to planet, whilst a rhythm track of squeaky toys being bludgeoned in an *Independence Day* fashion plays out in the background. My favourite is 'Sea Hunt,' in which Duane Eddy takes a gin & mogadon and tries to wash his smalls in the bathtub while the cast of *Das Boot* keep a beady periscope eye on him. But really there's no point trying to single out tracks: they're all great and the whole thing works as a most relaxing, enjoyable and what's more, repeatable, experience. There is a slightly sad dub track from the back of a single included for completism's sake on the re-issue, but, hey! it's a CD so you can programme it out. Perhaps they'll release it on vinyl and ditch that one.

**MATT WAND**

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## Barre Phillips / Keiji Haino

*Etchings In The Air*  
PSF D 74 CD

An improvised encounter between bassist Barre Phillips and Keiji Haino on vocals. And there the problem lies. Haino has used various instruments to make his noise — guitar, power trio, hurdy gurdy — and his voice work isn't particularly distinctive. He deals in the shriek, the grunt and the moan — the voice conveying the kinds of extreme, wordless state that his other music reaches so much more directly. In his solo work Haino's high, swooping singing can be a powerful tool, but in the unmarshalled squawkings here there is little to hold the attention. Phillips occasionally chimes in with some strangled vocal contributions; he shouldn't have bothered. He's a sensitive duet player but when faced with Haino's vocals, which frequently sound like something captured by a contact mike on a Newcastle curry-house toilet rim on a Friday night, he sounds far from his best. Often enough the two seem not to be sharing anything at all. Haino habitually seeks to communicate some dark and extreme aspects of experience but on this album, while there's no doubting the integrity of his efforts, nothing is passed on to the listener. Approach with a barge-pole.

**WILL MONTGOMERY**

## John Law & Louis Moholo

*The Boat Is Sinking, Apartheid Is Sinking*  
IMPETUS CD 19322

There is irony in the fact that on this CD, which is a celebration of the ending of apartheid, there is no musical integration whatever.

Anyone with a serious interest in improvised music will be a fan of drummer Louis Moholo, and will probably be curious about this recording. All I can say is that Moholo plays marvellously, and that the quality of his response to pianist John Law is what makes the CD worthwhile. The odd thing is that Law doesn't listen to Moholo at all. He just forges ahead with great energy, leaving Moholo to fill in his responses as best he can. Moholo might as well be playing with a pre-recorded tape of Law, so one-sided are the proceedings. I remember Evan Parker saying of his duo with Paul Lytton that he saw the two musics as coexisting without deliberate attempts at interplay. This could have been his reaction to a common tendency among free players to parrot each other's phrases. At any rate the Parker/Lytton duo never *sounded* like musicians ignoring each other. But the Law/Moholo duo is a different matter. And Moholo is doing so much — how could anyone take no notice of it? What can I say by way of guidance to the potential punter? You have got to hear this CD for Moholo; but perhaps, like me, you will find the music as a whole frustrating — an opportunity missed.

**RICHARD LEIGH**

## Sainkho Namchylak / Ned Rothenberg

*Amulet* LEO LR 231  
Mark Dresser

*Invocation* KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW 173

Between 1992 and 1995 Sainkho Namchylak and Ned Rothenberg recorded a series of impeccable duets for saxophone and voice. Each piece has its distinct character and the performers' egos are subservient to its form, textures and mood. There are two traditional pieces here — one Tuvan, one Saami — but most pieces are as rounded and complete unto themselves as stones smoothed by water. One or two pieces are more astringent, coming closer to free jazz and the iconoclastic vocal experiments of Diamanda Galas or Yoko Ono.

*Invocation* is a solo contrabass CD from Mark Dresser, one of the most consistently intriguing and musical bassists around. Recorded over a thirteen year period, its consistency is notable. Besides fine 'straight' performances, the disc documents multi-track, 'heavily edited' recordings and 'studies of subharmonic production' recorded in a reverb chamber. The most remarkable piece — I take it to be the one exploiting specially designed microphones to capture 'ordinarily inaudible' sounds (the sleeve notes rather frustratingly fail to elucidate the press release) — is a disturbing isolationist drone. Tunes are included by Ornette and Ellington and if, in the context, this signifies anything it's an uncommonly musical expression.

**TIM OWEN**



# Spontaneous Music Ensemble

*Hot And Cold Heroes (1980 & 1991)*

EMANEM 4008 CD

Taken from four variable-fi (usually hi) recording situations (one in John Stevens's house, the rest in concert), *Hot And Cold Heroes* is probably the best record of this particular SME lineup (Stevens, Roger Smith, Nigel Coombes, joined for one cut by flautist Neil Metcalfe and clarinetist John Rangecroft). Like all very good musics, it involves the reviewer in making statements that immediately need qualifying or even contradicting. Contradictions never failed to inform and stimulate this trio into playing great music, throughout their sixteen years.

Contradiction number one: Stevens was one of the most noticeable people in the world of improvised music, but he made the SME into a group that eschewed rhetoric, playing at low volume levels and expressing extreme emotional states in a musical language inspired by Webern and Noh music.

For me it was a fantastically important group. Flipping through 20-year old dog-eared copies of *Musics* magazine (which I co-edited), I'm impressed by the number of times we wrote about the band. We needed to, almost biologically. We wanted people to know how beautifully they were playing, knowing that they would easily get lost

in the noise from more media-friendly ensembles. And we had to work out for ourselves exactly *how* it was important.

Violin, Spanish guitar, tiny drumkit (no bass drum, two hi-hats) and a stage manner that suggested the most sophisticated put-on — John Stevens's supercool setting up routine; Roger Smith's Monkish juggling of cigarette, beer, chair, microphone, guitar; Nigel Coombes's deadpan expression.

Contradiction number two: these are very funny guys, but the playing was about life and death. Twelve minutes into 'Boileau Road' the music takes on an intensity that is simultaneously hilarious and incredibly moving. Number three: passion always combined with almost obsessive rhythmic accuracy. And Stevens loved to talk to the point where you thought the music would never start. Perhaps he was so excited that he wanted to put off the moment of beginning the piece for as long as possible? Didn't Derek Bailey say something about the start of an improvisation being the best bit?

As EMANEM label boss Martin Davidson's useful liner notes tell us, the trio was hardly over-recorded. In fact, there are only two earlier appear-

ances on disc, each shared with other groups. So, whilst fans of the group could at least hear Stevens in many other contexts (although rarely on his SME tiny kit), a search for Smith or Coombes material would not come up with very much..

As I have mentioned elsewhere, before their set at the 1991 *One For Terry Day* event, John Stevens calmed down the large and ebullient crowd with some rather terse words. To my surprise, the punters sat and listened in a truly magical silence. I was thrilled to find that a tape exists of this performance — especially as it was for Day, one of the few drummers who shares Stevens's incredible touch and imagination.

Just to confuse the picture, Stevens ends this piece with some aggressive trumpet playing, using a snare as a mirliton: quite scary — it's so exposed and fearless. I love 'That's It' for the extremely stubborn circular-breathing style fiddle with trumpet key-clicking and subtextual guitar. Coombes is extraordinary here — his responses are all utterly personal and perfectly right. The SME was a bewitching combination of confrontation and co-operation.

**STEVEBERESFORD**

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RESONANCE

39



## Evan Parker & Paul Lytton

*Two Octobers (1972-75)*

EMANEM 4009 CD

## John Russell & Roger Turner

*Birthdays (1996)*

EMANEM 4010 CD

## Paul Rutherford & Paul Rogers

*Rogues (1988)*

EMANEM 4007 CD

## John Carter & Bobby Bradford

*Tandem 1 (1982)*

EMANEM 4011 CD

## Steve Lacy

*Weal & Woe (1972-73)*

EMANEM 4004 CD

Here are five albums bursting with fun and passion, exhibiting a breadth of expression that reminds me of why I was first drawn to this music. The album by Parker (soprano & tenor saxes, voice & voice tube)/Lytton (percussion & live electronics) features three pieces, two live and one recorded in the studio. Already an established and pivotal figure, Parker was continually breaking new ground throughout the seventies. In '72 some of his trademarks were beginning to blossom — the incredible tonguing technique, the circular breathing. By '74 his virtuosity was well in place. The wide ranging experimentation of the first track (even featuring some 'Tibetan chanting' from Evan) gives way to a music of a more intense nature by 1974. Lytton is the more subversive of the two, but one longs for the live presence of the man

and his instruments. There are few musicians who could conjure up such a complex, rugged and inventive soundscape, even with contemporary technology. The virtuosity, empathy and vision of these two combine to create music of awesome beauty. And despite my reservations about recordings of improvised music, and especially historic recordings, I wholeheartedly recommend this.



If Lytton is slightly shaded by the production on *Two Octobers*, then Roger Turner's percussion is, in contrast, inescapable on his *Birthdays* duo with guitarist John Russell. He scuttles his sticks and brushes over and inside assorted skin, metal and wooden surfaces. Russell picks, scratches and scrapes his strings and the two combine to make music that is more rhythmic and timbral than tonal. What Kent Carter once called 'insect music.' To lay down in a summer meadow and listen to the insects is to be immersed in a wonderful soundfield, but it would not compare to the variety, skillful manipulation and aesthetic drive of the music here — recorded in the crisp acoustics of the Red Rose Club in North London. This is conversational improvising — fluid tempi, constant rhythmic flux, organic development, constantly spinning off at tangents, sudden silences and a remarkably fast flow of ideas. Beautiful.

Given his deeply felt socialist views, I'm not sure that trombonist Paul Rutherford will like me for saying it but *Rogues* is one of the more conservative offerings here. In essence it varies little from the Paul Rutherford Trio album *Bracknell 83* (on which Rutherford and double bassist Rogers were joined by

Nigel Morris on drums). This is more subdued without the drummer and the large festival setting — chamber music, less roguish than garrulous. These two have always been well suited — both extremely fine players working with, broadly speaking, conventional techniques. It is impossible to dislike music this elegant in conception and execution.

The Carter (clarinet)/Bradford (cornet) duo displays an even greater orthodoxy. It does however offer a rare and intimate snapshot of the great clarinetist in a live concert with a long term associate.

Carter was responsible for the majestic five piece composition "Roots And Folklore: Episodes In The Development Of American Folklore". I've only ever located two of the albums in this series, *Shadows On A Wall* and *Dauwe*. Despite being an academic, a commentator and an expert on the strands of black American musical traditions, Carter managed to create a vibrant and exciting work due to his own improvisatory flair and respect for the creativity of his excellent fellow musicians. So it is a little disappointing that this album reveals both players to be quite limited in a potentially freer context. Of course, they come from a stronger and longer tradition than their English counterparts and this is essentially a jazz album. The pieces unfold melodically in a manner that links the music of Ornette Coleman (with whom they were both associated) to the twenties clarinet/cornet duos of Louis Armstrong and Johnny Dodds.

*Weal & Woe* comes in two parts — his first solo concerts recorded in '72 and a quintet recorded in '73. The quintet comprises an intense Vietnam War protest. At its heart is a 16 minute barrage played full out by Lacy, Steve Potts (alto sax), Irene Aebi (cello, voice), Kent Carter (bass) and Oliver Johnson (drums) against tapes of gunshots and bombs. It feels more dated than the solos, partly because the moral imperatives of such protests have been overshadowed by the USA's ultimate humiliation, and partly because our view of such ferocious free playing has been altered by punk. Nevertheless the two halves of this excellent CD are appropriately paired to give us a slice of Lacy circa '72 or '73.

**GUS GARSIDE**

# Jim Dvorak, Marcio Mattos, Ken Hyder

*Bardo State Orchestra*  
IMPETUS CD 19425

I'm often repelled by pious packaging: anything by John Tavener, a sort of liturgical Barry Manilow, and the latest Coltrane CD. If you have read the arrogant review of *Bardo State Orchestra* in *The Wire*, please think again before dismissing it. There seems to be some objection to the religious concerns of the players, as if this invalidates what they play — clearly absurd. The notes refer to the musicians' gurus and to some of their past musical associates, and for the same reason: acknowledgement of influence. If you have no interest in religion, you can listen to the music for its own sake. The CD is notable mainly for the great warmth of the music, and for the players' evident pleasure in each other's performances.

There is some Tuvan-style vocalising, which is very effective and is seamlessly integrated into the rest of the music. I have, in the past, been quite bored by LPs of monks chanting, but still find that here it works. Perhaps my faith in the non-existence of a god is firm enough for me to withstand the fact of other people's faiths.

The first four tracks are fairly similar, the last three more varied and energetic, but really the whole CD is not to be missed. It sounds as if the first session ended with 'The Ultimate Gift' and the second began with a playback, followed by the recording of 'On The Mend'; the latter starts as if it were a continuation of the former. The ghost of Don Cherry can be faintly discerned, but this is not to say that the music is in any way derivative.

Maybe the *Wire* reviewer didn't get beyond the cover of the *Bardo State* recording. The music is what matters; don't let anyone put you off listening to music which could even — dare I say it? — uplift you.

**RICHARD LEIGH**

# Carlo Actis Dato

*Urartu*  
LEO LR 220

# Peter Brotzmann

*Nothing To Say*  
FMP 73

# Tom Guralnick

*Broken Dances For Muted Pieces*  
WHAT NEXT? WN 0017

Particularly it would seem in improvised music, solo playing is practised with increasing regularity, despite the view held by some that improvisation only really makes sense when executed with other people. For the artist it presents both a challenge and an opportunity to be literally more singleminded about which avenue to follow. For the audience or listener it is a unique way to get close to an individual's concept, and is often the easiest way into the music. These three CDs are prime examples of how varied the approaches can be with a single instrument, in this case the saxophone.

On first hearing I found the Carlo Actis Dato CD a bit lightweight, but has since been seduced by its exuberant charm and wit. A member of Italy's *Instabile Orchestra*, he is obviously a musician on top of his technique and relishing the chance to show it off in all its variety. He is most interesting on baritone, but also plays tenor and bass clarinet, on which he is able to circular-breathe almost effortlessly, creating fast, fluid, overlapping lines — or on one track a kind of didgeridoo impersonation based on closed tube harmonics and vocal inflexions. The improvisations are all constructed from ideas, motifs or themes. There are loose versions of 'Autumn Leaves' and 'Round Midnight,' and he uses his voice extensively to affect tonal variation and inject humour.

If I have a reservation, it is that I feel a lack of genuine risk-taking and a sense that he has played it all before, but the playing throughout is consummate and full of verve.

By contrast the Brotzmann CD sounds as though he walked into the studio and played the first thing that

came into his head. Titled *Nothing To Say* (his previous solo outing was *No Nothing* — what is he telling us?) and dedicated to Oscar Wilde, it's a monster at over 75 minutes and, as one would expect, drips with emotion. Even at its quietest moments, and there are plenty of those — one tarogato piece contains an extensive passage of breath sounds on the reed — it's as though Brotzmann is trying to wrench every last shred of feeling from the bowels of whichever horn is his hands.

There is something almost painfully honest about this music with its lack of overtly flashy technique and its direct, simple melodies, yet the improvisations constantly take unexpected turns, and there is the perpetual threat of some uncontrollable beast being unleashed at any moment. The humanity and lack of bullshit is what makes Brotzmann as vital and potent a force as ever.

American Tom Guralnick's offering is an altogether different kettle of fish. Much more consciously abstract in approach, it treads a similar path to John Butcher or Luc Houtkamp, and makes extensive use of live electronic processing. Short of seeing this guy in action, I have to rely on the sleeve notes to have any idea of what is going on, and they assure me that all the music is heard as played, which seems pretty incredible on its own. He works within a construction called the 'Mobile Saxophone And Mute Unit,' which allows him rapid access to a wide variety of sound sources and effects, often simultaneously. Consequently he is able to build sometimes very dense and complex soundscapes in a way akin to a modern keyboard player.

However one is never far removed from the original sound, which is either the soprano or tenor saxophone, or one of his invented or appropriated wind instruments, which can also be altered by his use of mutes. This satisfies my need to hear the musicianship at work without distracting from the mystery of the outcome. Not one I'll play often, but a fascinating recording and quite unlike anything I've heard before.

**ALAN WILKINSON**

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## Various Artists

### *Cosmic Kurushi Monsters: Tokyo Invasion Volume 1*

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For those of you intrigued by the Japanese issue of *Resonance*, but daunted by the sheer mass of expensive, esoteric, psychedelically or ascetically packaged CDs, this 22-track double CD might be one place to start. OK, it concentrates on the *musique-concrete*, post-punk, prog-rock vortex, and ignores exponents of any indigenous Japanese free improvisation, or the Eastern odysseys of western artists such as Derek Bailey or John Zorn, but what we have right here may well open inquiring ears the wider.

On initial exposure little more than a pell-mell melange of musical genres from a bewildering array of sound-sources, it doesn't take long for a fierce adherence to purposeful experimentation to reveal itself. There's very little of the merely indulgent or splenetic here. Rather there's an acute collective sensibility at work, processing and recycling a myriad of cultural influences — the avant-avatars of music, cinema, pulp fiction, teen style, fashion, and consumer capitalism — for re-evaluation and re-expression in an inimitably new fashion. There are more processes at work within this (presumably) tightly circumscribed scene than are at first apparent. There are moments of reprieve from the generally awesome musical intensity. Some of the material, particularly on the generally less intense second disc, is cinematic in its textural subtleties. Ground Zero, uncharacteristically, contribute a particularly sublime track from their *Revolutionary Pekinese Opera* CD. And almost all of it sounds like a lot of fun. Although I'm sure Japanese youth is just as self-conscious as its UK counterparts, the only thing notably lacking is the kind of *faux-naif* tribal primping that holds many of our domestic 'new music' practitioners back from producing music of lasting vitality.

**TIM OWEN**

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MR James story into your ear."

## Roger Smith

### *Unexpected Turns (Solo guitar improvisations 1993 to 1996)*

EMANEM 4014 CD

The third button along on the seven-inch-long Microjammer toy heavy metal guitar is, of course, the sound of two strings being bent: the most over-determined lick of all, guaranteeing cheap expressionism.

For those of an improvising persuasion, *avoiding* the obvious is a generally good idea, Derek Bailey setting the tone with talk of 'non-idiomatic improvisation.' Roger Smith's solo CD restores power to the note-bend — stretching strings so far that they buzz against the fingerboard and transform the instrument into a sort of percussion set.

*Unexpected Turns* has all the prettiness of Cage's 'Sonatas And Interludes' but is more sophisticated, especially rhythmically. Is Smith the only person playing free improv on Spanish guitar? Sometimes we hear what seem to be spiders crawling cautiously up the fingerboard before being attacked by a cleaning lady with a vicious scrubbing brush. All at a volume level that suggests Audrey Hepburn whispering an MR James story into your ear. Smith's respect for pitch organisation gives his playing a dimension lacking in many of his contemporaries.



If the pattern holds (I hope not), Smith's third solo recording will be out in 2012, by which time we will have another recording format which sits on the head of a needle.

*Unexpected Turns* differs from his 1980 LP in being a selection from many hours of home playing, spread over several years. There is no disruption in style — Smith has a consistency in his playing that I envy — and the music is constantly involving and evolving. Track one seems to include a person in the background playing clackers, and the miking is necessarily so close that you hear Smith's breathing. That seems right for such intimate music, which nevertheless contains sudden changes of direction and articulation.

Whether or not Smith likes John Dowland, I sense an affinity — deep and sometimes painful, untheatrical, finessed music. A master of punctuated equilibrium.

**STEVE BERESFORD**

## Noises off:

**Recent recordings:** Who needs coffee when you have **Brian Lavelle and Richard Young's Radios** (Freek Records FFR018)? Just turn the volume up incredibly loud and you have a crude, jagged Metal Machine Music that delights. It's vicious. (*That's enough Lou Reed allusions, Ed*). Brian and Richard are both credited with casio and electric guitar but there's a single sound output so I imagine they've set up some kind of feedback loop between the two instruments. Richard is hip in a kind of underground way (and hey! he writes a recipe column for *The Vegan*) but I must say that I've not been convinced by the other work I've heard of his. This is terrific.

In contrast, **RLW's** *When freezing air stings like ice I shall breathe again* (Streamline 1008) is a very quiet record often bordering on the imperceptible with silence as a structural consideration. Imperceptibility goes hand in hand with intangibility with the sounds having very few referential handles. There's a whole lot of mystery here. A half-light, a veil over a doorway to another world. Absolutely beautiful. Cover by Jim O'Rourke and text by David Grubbs if you need that kind of seal of approval. **Ralf Wehowsky's** (RLW under his real name) *Nameless Victims* (Metamkine MKCD020) is ever so slightly more conventional in that it is busier and a lot of the sounds are identifiably derived from double bass.

It gets my goat, as it were, when people trot off the glib "Well **John Cage** was full of great ideas, but hey, you wouldn't want to listen to his music." His *Ryoanji* (hat ARTCD 6183), rises to the top of a pile of a glut of CDs that seemingly get produced for the sake of it. A single long piece comprised of simple, graceful gestures surrounded by silence. A neat analogy to the Zen meditation garden of the title.

For some reason, I first listened to **Martin Archer's** "A game of poker with Morton Feldman" from *This music is silent until you listen* (Discus CD6) - a compilation of five electroacoustic works by different artists - directly after *Ryoanji*. The piano part is a computer shuffled repetition of a number of phrases, though you wouldn't necessarily notice, sounding as it does as a live through-played part. This is coupled with a more directly expressive (partly

## Phil England catches up with the latest sounds and reading matter.

improvised) live cello part and later on in the piece some warm electronic drones and pulses.

Archer's *Ghost Lilly Arcade* continues and elaborates upon this confusion of real-time/computer-time, improvisation/composition, choice/chance by drawing on a larger group of musicians to add parts to selected synthesiser improvisations. The principle 'outsiders' contributions take place in their own spaces and times, though there are also live interactive contributions by musicians in real-time. Martin has also taken the liberty of mixing, arranging, manipulating and cut-and-pasting his collaborators. The result is an intriguing and predominantly fresh sounding mix.

**Recent publications:** *Sound Arts Vol 9:* small (20 A5 pages) bi-lingual magazine from the Xebec Foundation in Japan (Kobe-based sound art institution that suffered considerable damage in the recent earthquake). Brief reports on the "Festivity on an Ancient Hill" sound art festival; MIMI Festival; connections between Indian and Japanese music; Daniel Lentz; Carl Stone.

*Immerse Number 1:* exciting new addition to the world of music magazines: confidently designed and hard-nosed in its editorial content. This issue: Autechre, Meat Beat Manifesto, CM von Hauswoff, Download, etc. Hefty review section covering what can be broadly be described as ambient, techno, industrial, some jazz etc. I wanted more depth in the features I was interested in and surely the for-teen, conspiracy and esoteric sound topics need to be dealt with by a mind like a scalpel blade. Aiming to be quarterly and distributed by Time Out in the UK.

*Bronx Cheer 3:* Canadian fanzine featuring interviews with Eddie Prevost (AMM), Tatsuya Yoshida (Ruins), Christian Vander (Magma) and Swiss improv duo Gush. Coming from an out-rock background but gravitating towards spontaneously generated musics of all kinds and with a refreshing enthusiasm.

*Musicworks 65:* Excellent issue of this magazine whose interest inevitably varies depending upon the chosen theme. This time there is a focus on musicians and sound artists who have a strong visual component to their work. Includes a

piece on Jerry Hunt - the esoteric sound/performance artist and live electronics innovator who's work is only really getting the exposure it deserves after his suicide in 1993, a suicide meticulously planned after suffering emphysema and lung cancer and demonstrated on his final video work Telephone Calls to the Dead. Also, the Glass Orchestra, interdisciplinary artist and CCMC improviser Nobuo Kubota, Czech bagpipe master Josef Rezny and happening/intervention artists V13(G)P3U.

*Browbeat 2:* Lou Reed's Metal Machine Music, Ennio Morricone, Dog Faced Hermans, Diamanda Galas, Keiji Haino, Omoide Hatoba and Voice Crack. Kind of like Bananafish without the acid-laced obliqueness. John Zorn listed as contributor. Recommended.

*EST 7:* Pierre Henri, Lilith, Tony Conrad, Rhys Chatham, Charlemagne Palestine, Modified, mammoth review section, 90 packed pages and recommended as always.

*Variant Volume 2 Number 1:* Welcome reappearance by this Glasgow-based cross-arts magazine which folded some three years when funding was withdrawn by the Scottish Arts Council. Now a free broadsheet with mass distribution rather than a lavish gloss and colour publication but with its ruthlessly independent and penetrating critique reaffirmed and twice as sharp.

*Noisegate Issue 3:* Improving from issue to issue and growing in size too. Fascinating piece by Joe Bank (aka Disinformation) on his audio translation of atmospheric electrical phenomena. Plus intentional disorientation in public spaces and music on the web survey.

And finally an overdue plug for **Roger Sutherland's** excellent hardback study of *New Perspectives in Music* (Sun Tavern Fields). Rudely dismissed by Ben Watson in *The Wire*, this is in fact the major English language source book on post-war avant-garde music. Stockhausen, Cage, Xenakis, live electronics, graphic scores, indeterminacy, systems music, fluxus, Cardew, The Scratch Orchestra, improvisation, sound sculptures and invented instruments all get dealt with. Many rare photographs. Indispensable.

**PHIL ENGLAND**

*Sound Arts Vol 9*, c/o Xebec Corporation, 7-2-1 Minatojima-Nakamachi, Chuo-ku, Kobe, 650, Japan (or <http://www.sukothai.com>).

*Immerse Number 1*, £3.25 inc p+p from 106 Plover Way, London SE16 1TZ.

*Bronx Cheer*, Mark Raap, 18348 67 Ave, Surrey, BC Canada V3S 8E7.

*Musicworks 3* issue subscription with CD \$33 Canada, \$39 USA, \$42 elsewhere, \$65 institution, 179 Richmond St West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 1V3.

*Browbeat 2*, \$4+p+post, PO Box 11124, Oakland, CA 94611-1124, USA.

*EST 7 3* (UK), £3.50 (elsewhere) from 182 Cavendish Rd, London SW12 0DA.

*Variant Vol 2 No 1*, 4 issues a year for £2 (UK), £3 (EC), £5.50 (N America), £5.50 (elsewhere).

*Noisegate 3*, £2 to *Noisegate* c/o 20 Wake Rd, Nether Edge, Sheffield S7 1HG.

*New Perspectives in Music*, £30.00 inc p+p from Sun Tavern Fields, PO Box 982, London E1 9EQ.

# Clive Bell's Bumper Bundle: Sounds Of The Summer and Christmas Present Suggestions

The declension of home entertaining: she lays on a banquet, you give a dinner party, I have some friends round for a meal. Some critics sneer at records played at dinner parties, but the other day I heard *Hairballs*, that maelstrom of plunderphonics by Manchester group **Stock, Hausen & Walkman**, played at a dinner party to universal approval. The handstitched fun-fur sleeve was passed around during the dessert course.

SH&W's latest, *Organ Transplants*, finds the group reduced to a duo, but there's a sharpness and lightness of touch that makes this their most appealing product so far. Instead of the 'normal' melding of polar opposite soundworlds — say Cuban salsa and dogs barking — we have organ records sampled and remixed with, well, other organ records. It's a collaged tribute to all those Easy Listening organ albums that no one admits to owning. The joke works extremely well, and in case you're worried, there isn't even too much organ. If SH&W get any more accessible, they're going to end up playing at banquets. Get the vinyl version, it has an extra four tracks on a 7" single, and it's bigger.

I can't be sure, but I think what happens on *X-Ray Eyes* is that **Caroline Kraabel** has the brilliant idea of recording the first song, 'Worlds Collide,' while travelling to the studio by public transport. Amid the sounds of an early morning Baltimore street, she sings quietly to herself. Then she seems to board a train or tram, whatever Baltimore has, and by the time we merge with the studio world, a battery of saxophones is meshed with roaring industrial noise. Kraabel's punk-jazz

sax and fierce songs, often seen solo in England, meet a perfect foil in Jason Willett's trumpet, bottle-bank guitar, tape treatments and especially his drums, which sound like a one-man-band on the run from the Baltimore police. The recordings are hectic and energetic, possibly because of the minus 3C temperature in the studio. And on the title track John Edwards plays his double bass part down the phone from London — eat your heart out, Internet hard-disc file transmission systems.

Three cassettes pressed into my hand at the LMC Festival introduced me to the strange world of IMMP, a cassette label based in Princeton, New Jersey. This is experimental music in bite-sized three-minute chunks, characterised by cheap instruments, toys and a cheerful influence from pop music in general and Brian Eno in particular. **Igor** is a key figure in IMMP — his solo *Vocksverkah* is entirely made from recordings of his voice and mouth. Featuring a lot of deliberately naive sampler use, it's a throwaway trash riposte to Trevor Wishart. Igor's studio-based 'band' is called Superfinemagneticparticle, and their *Murk* is a largely successful collection of oddities with titles like 'Freak Tent' and 'I Only Get Up When The House Is On Fire.' Not particularly murky, these studio improvisations aim for an uncluttered and playful atmosphere.

Someone's making a din in Northumberland; it's called *Bleekmen* and there's a 7" EP for a mere £2. Free-form clanging electric guitar overlaid with free-form distortion guitar and pit-bull saxophones. A radio sample here, a synth chord there, a flute trill — this is

music that hasn't settled down and had kids yet. My copy came wrapped in a page torn out of a women's magazine, together with a letter that started "Hello whoever". Pretty good, whatever.

The cassette release *Trav'lin' Light* is a good place to start your **Kenny Process Team** collection. Although the K.P. Team's stage presentation may set new standards of unprepossessing sock-gazing, they are very much a live combo, and this remarkably clear recording catches the quartet performing live (in Lancaster) in a style that might well be described in some quarters as shitkicking. Best rock album of the year, in my humble opinion. The addition of Simon King's second guitar to grapple with those brain-snagging happy-sad melodies has propelled the music into a more extrovert area. And the cassette material is nearly all newly written since last year's vinyl LP *Surfin'*. What next? A Mini-Disc titled *Toddlin'*?

Another cassette to pack a surprising punch is the *Christmas Party Sing Along* from **Pearly Oyster**. Ged Haney and Emma Calder make animated films — when it comes to music, they can barely sing and they've only got one keyboard, which sounds as though it's covered in purple knobs and flashing lights. And yet their ska-toasting version of 'We Wish You A Merry Christmas' is a classic, once heard never really forgotten. Did I mention it's painfully funny? If the three carols on the first tape aren't sufficient, there's a followup with three more from 'The Glam Rock Years': Christmas songs by Gary Glitter, Slade and Wizzard, all given the unmistakable Pearly Oyster treatment.

**CLIVE BELL**

*Organ Transplants* by Stock, Hausen & Walkman: Hot Air, 116 Blackfriar Court, Salford M3 7 FS. Fax (44) 161 832 7991. Distributed by These: Fax (44) 171 582 5278.

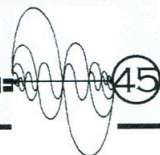
*X-Ray Eyes* (Caroline Kraabel and Jason Willett), Megaphone Limited 007. £12:50 inc. P&P from 59 Lucey Way, St James Rd, London SE 16. IMMP, PO Box 418, Princeton, New Jersey 08452, USA.

Seven-inch by Bleekmen, £2 from Classic English Womb, 16 Stobhill Villas, Morpeth, Northumberland NE6 1 2SH.

*Trav'lin' Light* by Kenny Process Team. Cassette £5 + P&P from 706 Lea Bridge Rd, London E10. HQ phone 0181 472 8486.

*Pearly Oyster*, 1 Sly Street, London E1 2LE. Ph 0171 265 8862. Fax 0171 702 8597.

RESONANCE



## Improvised Music Touring Scheme 1997/98

■ Once again, the Arts Council is offering a limited amount of money for the support of tours by improvised music groups. This support will be available to groups playing mainly improvised music, ie music mostly without any pre-determined harmonic or rhythmic structures. With the help of the 1996/97 scheme, 11 improvising groups were supported, sums ranging from £1300 to £2800.

■ The projects should fall between May 1997 and March 1998.

■ For an application form, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Rajan Hooper, Music Department, 14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ.

■ Closing Date: Thursday 20 February 1997  
LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED

**The Arts Council has an equal opportunities policy and warmly welcomes applications from all sections of the community**

# THE ARTS COUNCIL OF ENGLAND

**RAOUL BJÖRKENHEIM/KRAKATAU "Ritual"**  
(Cuneiform Rune 86)  
A reissue of the lp-only first release by this rock/avant/fusion guitarist and his band Krakatau, who have also released two CDs on ECM. Includes two bonus tracks. *Musician* called this "one of the best albums heard in a few months...."

**THE MUFFINS "<185>"**  
(Cuneiform 55013)  
A reissue of the final album by this legendary U.S. avant rock band. Produced by Fred Frith, this has been out of print for over 10 years, and includes seven bonus tracks.

**PRESENT "Live"**  
(Cuneiform Rune 87)  
Present was founded by Roger Trigaux, the co-founder of Belgium's Unvers Zero. Dark, dense, heavy and metallic, this was recorded during their European tour of 1995, and is their 1st release in over a decade.

**SOFT MACHINE "Spaced"**  
(Cuneiform Rune 90)  
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*Ruin* - WORLD PREMIERE - Klangforum Wien

27 November 1996

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival

*Negatives* - UK PREMIERE

ELISION, Sandro Gorli, conductor

30 January 1997, Conway Hall, London

*Tract* - LONDON PREMIERE of *Part II* - Ian Pace, piano

**CD release:** *Vanity* recorded by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, to be released by NMC in late 1996.

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## LIVE REVIEWS

*CLIVE BELL enters a theatre of whirling speakers, while RICHARD LEIGH explores passive smoking with taped accompaniment and KERSTEN GLANDIEN has her mind blown in Berlin.*

### Derek Bailey

Upstairs at The Garage, London, 9 July 1996

### John Butcher + John Butcher

### Phil Durrant & John Russell

October Gallery, London, 12 July 1996

The *Garage* is a place for people who like their music deafening and who think that nicotine is hip. There are no windows—just a noisy air-conditioner which would in any case make the subtleties of quiet music inaudible.

The gig had been publicised as **Derek Bailey's** 'jungle' set. On the evidence of what I heard that night, 'jungle' means pleasant if predictable drumming with occasional bursts of birdsong—like a protracted intro to "La Bamba", and definitely not to be confused with early Ellington.

Bailey played with/against a tape of this. It was odd: a musician who has always played either solo or with players capable of interaction, choosing to work with a prerecorded tape. In the event, he did what he so often does: moved in and out of phase with what was on the tape, echoing or predicting its contents in a manner which verged on parody.

The set lasted about twenty minutes and was very dramatic, though not as loud as the two unbearably noisy groups which had played earlier. I hadn't heard Bailey for some months, and it was great to be reminded how inventive he is. It occurred to me that my first exposure to his music had taken place thirty years earlier, and that there's good reason for me to be still turning up.

Two sets, one solo, one trio, to launch **John Butcher's** new solo CD *London And Cologne* (Rastascan). In the first half, Butcher played two tenor solos and one on soprano—as always, very rich in invention and very mellow in sound. He seems to be able to explore new sonorities without sounding anguished—a rare achievement. His playing was so powerful that I wondered what would be left for the trio.

The second half seemed to be a dilution of the energy; though perhaps what was diminished was my energy as a listener. I felt that the trio often failed to follow up ideas with much inventiveness.

In the past, hearing John Butcher in a variety of contexts, I've thought that he was not assertive enough, and that he tended to wait for someone else to prod him into activity—though this could equally be an desire not to hog the limelight. Perhaps that's what happened here. Or perhaps nothing, after that solo set, could be anything but an anticlimax.

The CD, mostly recorded live, is as indispensable as Butcher's first, *Thirteen Friendly Numbers* (ACTA). While the Garbarek, Pine and Brecker bandwagon trundles on, John Butcher and a (very) few others are unobtrusively getting on with something that will last. **RICHARD LEIGH**

### Lee & Dawes

"In The Ether"

Battersea Arts Centre, London, 25 January 1996

**Ray Lee** and **Harry Dawes** present a kind of musical conjuring show, in which instruments are played without being touched. The Theremin might spring to mind, that strange contraption of aerials and early Russian electronics. A haunting wail is coaxed out by precise movements of the performer's hands through an electromagnetic field. In fact a pair of duetting Theremins lies at the heart of this show; Lee and Dawes fix each other with a fierce stare, their fingers flickering and carving the air as if miming invisible cellos. The music is a structured improvisation, and comes across as a mixture of wit and careful control. The Theremin is extremely difficult to play well—like playing a violin with no strings or neck—and on this particular day Lee and Dawes had spent a harrowing afternoon receiving a music lesson from the world's top Thereminist, Lydia Kavina.

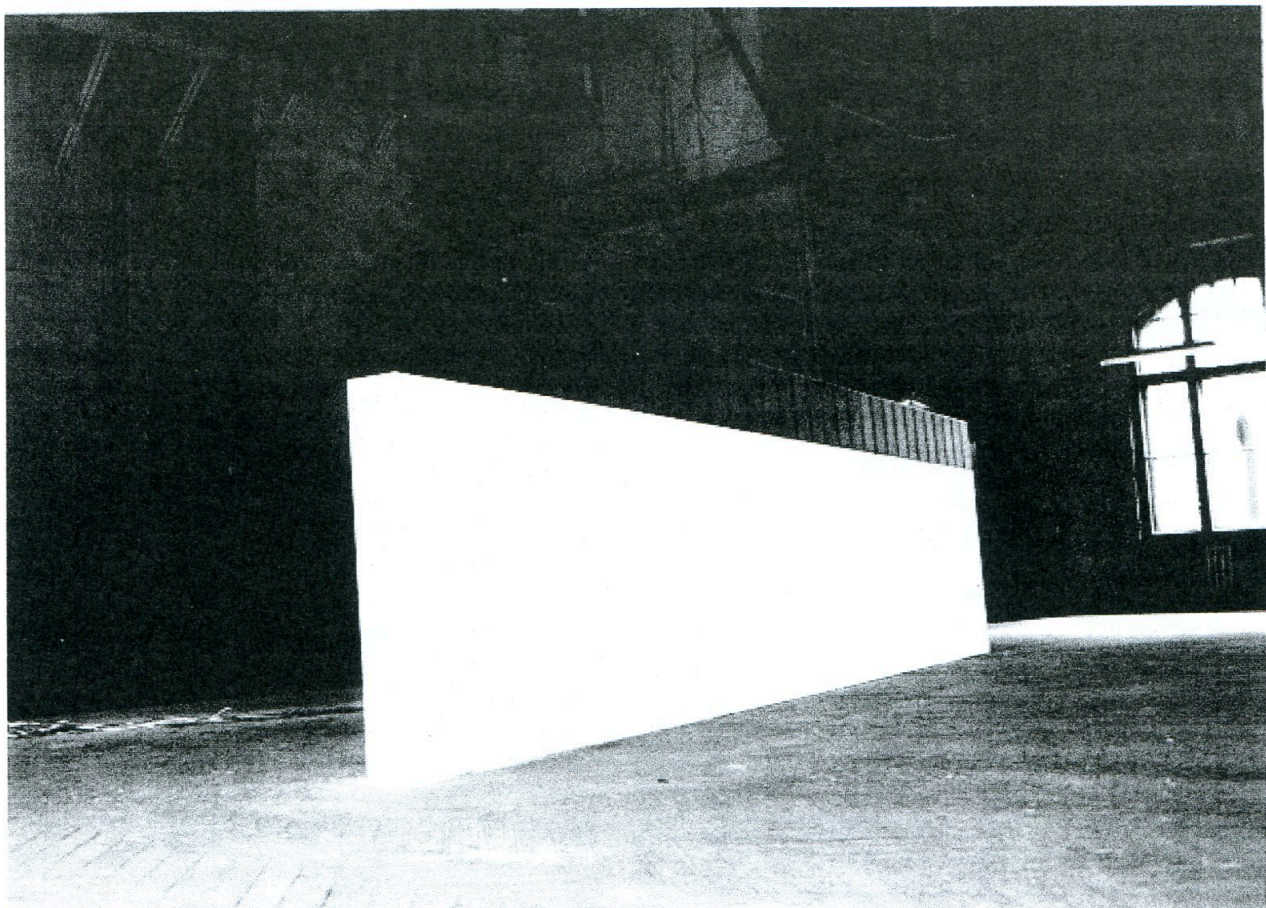
Other electronic instruments are paraded in the show—a regiment of loudspeakers attached to perspex woks and cassette players, which produce sound only when a hand hovers above them. At the start of the evening a whirling speaker magically continues to buzz after its lead has been severed. And the performance ends with the beautiful sight of speakers and lights swinging the full length of the stage, like an electric belfry, Harry Dawes dodging in and out with a megaphone.

Lee & Dawes draw on such performance traditions as magic shows, 50s B-movies featuring scientists amid roomfuls of equipment, and the art of the radio sound effects expert performing arcane rituals in front of a microphone. Occasionally speaking fragments of text, they present two characters obsessed with radio waves, magnets and "great swirls of electrostatic mist". We also see these characters in a fine short film by **Frances Boyle**: a man tumbles like Buster Keaton under a pylon, driven to distraction by electromagnetic forces. The same man stands very still in a park while sped-up pigeons flit about him like charged particles.

"In The Ether" has several memorable sights and musical episodes, and should perhaps be seen mainly as a musical performance. The presentation also arouses expectations of theatre, which are then only thinly satisfied. Lee and Dawes adopt intense, obsessive personas, which, maybe in the interest of preserving mystery, are not allowed to develop within a context or hint of narrative. Talking to them afterwards, I was struck by the fact that in reality they are passionate, obsessive people, and so maybe they should be themselves on stage a little more. Music-theatre is a problematic area, but all the same this is a highly original show with a strong, not to say charged, atmosphere.

**CLIVE BELL**





Above: Hans-Peter Kuhn: Ballet of Tones. Right: Glandien/Luders: Holle.

## SONAMBIENTE

### *Sound Art Festival* Berlin, Summer '96

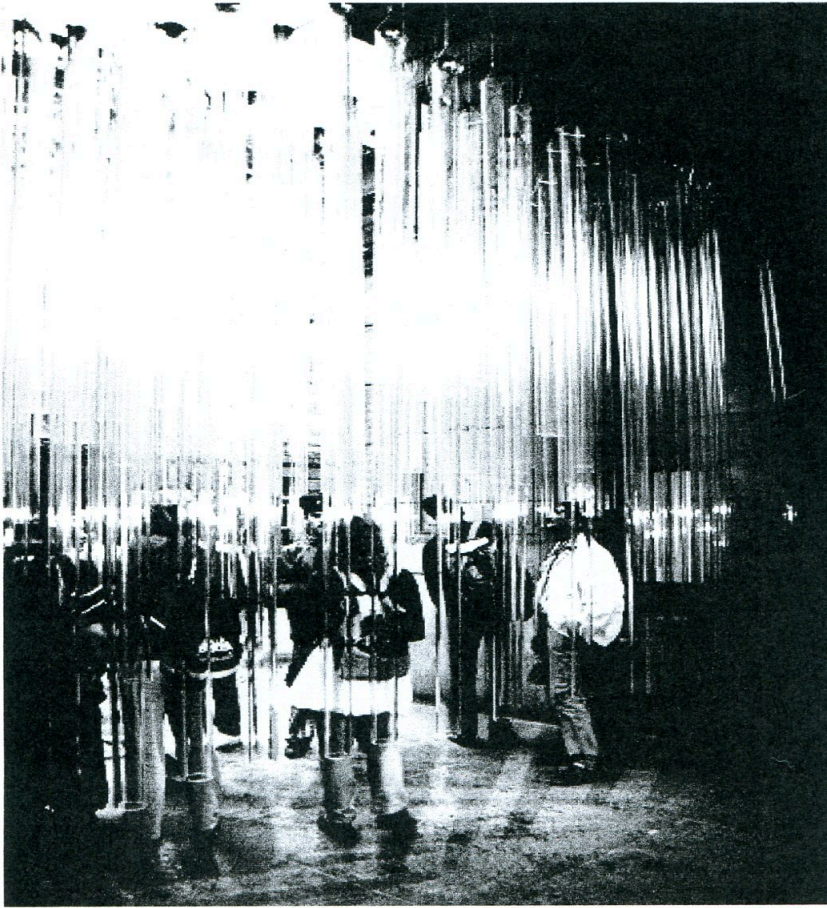
Where better to set up an international Sound Art festival today than in Berlin? The location is perfect and the time seems to be just right. Berlin is on the verge of new departures. It holds the tension between a powerful, controversial past — surfacing not least in the occasion which hosts the event, the 300th anniversary of the Academy of Art — and a distinct aspiration for the future — embodied in the biggest building sites in Europe. Recent changes in German history contribute to the unique spirit and energy of this place, to an atmosphere that attracts many national and international artists to live and work here permanently, or temporarily — some as part of the DAAD, the German academic exchange programme.<sup>1</sup>

Against this background the Academy of Art asked over 100 artists to take part in what the programme notes called the “internationally biggest presentation of Sound Art” to date. Between the 9th August and the 8th September, 1996 about 77 projects scanned the grey zones between sound, music, noise, various visual media such as installation, object, sculpture, projection, painting, video, film, architecture, theatre and dance — for new mixtures and mergers. In order to give a good insight into the current state of this complex discourse the organizers, Christian Kneisel, Matthias Osterwold and Georg Weckwerth invited Sound Art pioneers, reigning protagonists and newcomers with works already shown elsewhere or newly built for this occasion. The sheer magnitude of this undertaking is indeed impressive and defeats brief description. Yet, a glimpse can still be attempted.

Sound-installations and -objects constitute the core of the *Sonambiente*. In six mostly derelict or currently unused buildings, as well as some distinct outside locations, some 50 artists pro-

vided an exhaustive insight into the vast range of projects presently lingering under the umbrella of Sound Art. Apart from the usual suspects in this field, like Nam June Paik, Laurie Anderson and **Brian Eno** — whose creativity seems to suffer considerably under the strain of constant demand — we find quite a number of artists willing to risk more adventurous and contemporary approaches. The works on show are manifold and defy — virtually by definition — an easy taxonomy. They explore a wide variety of relationships between sound, vision and space. Berlin's appealing locations are loaded with memories — especially in the Eastern part of the city, where most of the buildings used for the installations are situated. Here the links between sound and ambiance are there for the taking.

**Hans Peter Kuhn** — known to British readers through his collaboration with Robert Wilson at the London Clink last summer — situates his “Ballet of Tones” (pictured) in a derelict ballroom in the Sophienstrasse: a skeletal cast-iron



balcony runs around its upper part, dim sunlight fades through blind windows onto tar-blackened parquet and green-brownish walls — a line of speakers mounted on a low white wall occasionally releases running lines of tones. The atmosphere of nostalgia and tranquillity created in this sleeping place makes you never want to leave.

**Christina Kubisch's** room is located in the only old house left on Berlin's busiest building site at the Potsdamer Platz — the Weinhaus Huth. Speakers transmit the earsplitting noise from the work outside into a dark, empty room where fluorescent writing on small lit plates reflect on the "Colours of Silence." Now and then the transmission is interrupted, leaving us in the still silence.

While both these works rely on the perceptiveness of the audience and its ability to associate sounds with their environment, other works focus less on the space and more on the sound effect attained and its generation. Some of them seek more of a hands-on interaction with the visitors, leaving the sound release or its manipulation to them.

"Liquid percussion" by **Trimpin**, for instance, gives its audience the option to hear a pre-set composition or alternatively to create their own sound pieces. This visually appealing sound sculpture, with its colourful glass vessels and strange upright tubes set on a bed of shingle, releases computer-controlled water drops, from over 100 valves, onto different sounding-surfaces, such as glass, metal, stretched rubber and water, creating a variety of pitches and sound colours. The rhythmic precision of the falling drops results in an intriguing water music.

**Sam Auinger** and **Bruce Odland** placed their "Balance 1.0" in the cellar of the derelict Academy building at the Pariser Platz. Its subtitle "It works, but it doesn't seem to; or, it doesn't seem to work, but it does" hints at the bricolage of objects, materials and sound to hand. From two play stations one or several visitors can trigger a variety of sound loops and light effects. Depending on the number of people joining in, this aleatoric mix of miscellaneous sounds, rhythmic beats, short voice scraps and urban noises can escalate into an exciting sound performance.

A much more subtle method of sound exploration is pursued by **Paul DeMarinis** in "Gray Matter." Here the sculptural quality of the objects and the sound discovery by the public come to the fore. Long wires, strung between various objects — a toaster and a door, a double bass mounted to the ceiling and a zinc bath tub, wooden wall mounts and a violin — exhibit an electromagnetic activity that through friction, using hand or objects, can be turned into mechanical vibration, releasing melodies, scales of tones, subtle noises or glissandi. The generation of these sounds requires fine feeling and careful listening, while the actual mechanism remains obscure and adds to the sense of enchantment.

Whereas DeMarinis bases his works on a discovery made in the last century, many installations rely on sonic effects achieved by new technology. Yet, the actual technical processes employed often remain hidden too, inducing intriguing *trompe l'oreille* effects.

**Ulrich Eller** set up 41 snare drums in the light and spacious banqueting hall of the former GDR Council of State. Speakers resting inside each drum emit a short basic tone against the differently tuned snare heads, producing a variety of drum sounds. Standing "In the circle of drums," listeners find themselves surrounded by surprising sound movements. The sound producing mechanism is not revealed — we enjoy the effects.

A few installations can be found in outside locations such as the audience magnet "Holle" — an accessible sound gate installed by **Lutz Glandien** and **Malte Lüders** in the picturesque arcades of the States Library Under den Linden. 60 speakers mounted into 216 free hanging acrylic glass tubes of different length shower the public standing underneath with a sound piece inspired by an old German fairy tale.

One project is dedicated especially to the city of Berlin. Following a detailed conceptual plan, six composers and six video artists collaborated in the creation of 24 video clips of two and a half minutes each. These document an urban "Vortex," seeking to draw the audience into the depths of

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plays Brant, Ives and Nancarrow

**Wednesday 6 November**

RFH 3 at 8pm £8

The Brood

featuring Susan Stenger (Band of Susans), Bruce Gilbert (Wire), Justine Frischmann (Elastica) and others, playing classics of American experimental music

**Sunday 10 November**

RFH 1 at 7.30pm £10 - £20

A Tribute to Miles Davis & Gil Evans

London Sinfonietta with Guy Barker and Randy Brecker

**Tuesday 12 November**

RFH 3 at 6.15pm £7 - £10

Valdine Anderson & Thomas Adès

perform songs by Babbitt, Crumb, Nancarrow, Cage, Adams and Ives

**Tuesday 12 November**

RFH 2 at 7.45pm £12.50 - £15

Carmen Lundy

**Tuesday 12 November**

RFH 3 at 8pm £7 - £10

Arditti Quartet

plays Crawford Seeger, Carter, Reynolds, Nancarrow and Ives

**Thursday 14 November**

RFH 1 at 7.30pm £10 - £20

Michael Brecker Band & John Scofield Band

**Saturday 16 November**

RFH 3 at 6.30pm and 8.30pm £8.50

Creative Jazz Orchestra

with Bill Frisell and Marty Ehrlich plays the music of Julius Hemphill

**Tuesday 19 November**

Chelsfield Room, RFH 1 at 6.30pm

George Crumb

in conversation

**Tuesday 19 November**

RFH 1 at 7.30pm £6 - £16

Kronos Quartet

play Harry Partch, Lee Hyla, Ives and George Crumb's *Black Angels* (staged)

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metropolitan life. Unfortunately, the "Vortex" loses some of its tractive power through the shortcomings of its actual presentation. In this it shares the fate of a fair number of installations presented at the *Sonambiente* festival which exhibit little communicative strength.

Although Sound Art casts a long shadow throughout the 20th century, many installations and objects still struggle with the very basic problems and traps of this discourse—for example, the 30-second effect. Costly installations which can't hold the interest of the public for more than half a minute bear a great potential for boredom and insignificance and invite questions about the artist's intention. These questions can not be dismissed simply by referring to the creative responsibility of the recipient, since interaction as communication is a two way process. The problem is exacerbated by the use of new technology, which increases the difficulty of making conceptual ideas or impressive project descriptions sensually communicable, sensuously experiential.

The installation part of the *Sonambiente* festival is complemented by many other events such as concerts, the film series 'Sound Staccato and Image Flood' (presenting remarkable collaborations between sound and film), happenings, dance and theatre performances, and theoretical discussions. To realize this ambitious undertaking the organizers teamed up with a number of other institutions and venues. The entire event might keep a visitor busy for the whole month.

The musical part of the festival is also enticing, focusing on the topic of 'Sound in Space'. It ranges from music performances, pieces for carillon (by **Charlemagne Palestine**) and bells and tape concerts to all kinds of multimedia events. I attended the premier of **Jon Rose's** new bold multi-media piece "Perks"<sup>2</sup>—an interactive badminton game with two wired up badminton players, live musicians, video and computer images and a ghost pianist—all processed through the author's inventive mind and bizarre sense of humor.

All in all, the *Sonambiente* provides a mind-blowing *tour de force* through the international Sound Art landscape. For documentational purposes this event was coordinated with a forthcoming book-project of the Prestel publishing house. Just in time for the festival a catalogue-book compiled by Helga de la Motte-Haber was published, including not only summaries on each of the participating artists, but also extensive theoretical reflections on the broad subject of Sound Art and a chronology of its development in the 20th century.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the Academy of Art took this opportunity to set up a new CD-series, "The Listening Room", dedicated to radiophonic and other sound works, the first three titles of which are already out.

Considering the progressive draining of public resources from art and culture here in Britain, this Berlin festival, with its conceptual and organizational complexity and proudly displayed emotional and financial investment, leaves us speechless with envy.

**KERSTEN GLANDIEN**

1. Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Berlin, 10117 Berlin, Jägerstr. 23.

2. Available on CD (ReRJR3) from ReR, 79 Beulah Rd, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8JG.

3. Klangkunst. Prestel. München/New York, 1966.

Impressions of the third LMC/Mixing It New Aura series, February/March 1996, Conway Hall, Holborn, London  
by Roger Boulding,  
noise consultant

True! - nervous - very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses - not destroyed - not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all the things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell.

**"Waiting for the gift of sound and vision..."**

New Yawwk's son of sound, David Shea, blistered the ear while the eye perused his video cut-ups, pastoral, then increasingly violent. Armed with sampler, 992 scronic noises specially compiled to play "live" to his silent movies had yours truly munching popcorn to this gifted garrotter's flicks like there was not tomorrow.

Now, if someone would invent the mideo computer for David...

**"Look what they done to my song, ma..."**

On the long blank vista of pier, devoid of any ships wafts the keening sound of the saxophone of Evan Parker. All that's missing is the candlelight. Zoviet\*France: are medium-sized and they manufacture their own brand of ectoplasm, peopling the emptiness with generation upon generation of sound,

**"I seen the needle and the damage done"**



where symbiotic cadavers decorated with striations and scratches merge into a dim contrastless nuclear winter. The hooded ones in the audience smile - but laugh no more. Now repeat after me, dear Santa, get me an echo-unit for xmas.

**"It's yesterday once more..."**

Xper.Xr (pronounced Xper.Xr), have popped over from Hong Kong, due to be reclaimed by China in 97, working hard for the mantle of terrible infants, utilizing old-school scratchology, laying down the beat, y'all, murdering



the likes of Kung Fu Fighting and peppering the air with obscene expletives. You could hear the clutter of jaw-bones as they littered the dance-floor. Meantime, Stock, Hausen & Walkman bravely deployed their sonics like genial uncles slipping you sweetie-money so they can neck on the sofa. The external spectacle of Xper.Xr body-popping and break-dancing shall be indelibly etched on my retina, these snappy puppies gleefully worrying mangy ol' yella...

**"Killing me softly..."**

Deploying three or was it four turntables and sundry back-up tapes, the enigmatic DJ Spooky took to the stage. Manipulating the platters, 33s and 45ers, cutting and rewinding, super-deft and adept, splashing in chunks of reggae with elegance.

**"While my guitar gently weeps..."**

Main are guitarists who play processors, which create grating drones. They were, on this outing, paired up with AMM drummer Eddie Prevost, and sound-sculptor Max Eastley, who both faithfully listened, wrenching a grisly beauty from the sonorous froths that Main concocted. Sad to relate, during intermission I got involved in a scuffle with some drunken trainspotters regarding Eddie's new kit, so subsequently missed Negativland's Crosley Bendix, lecturing on the discovery of a new colour!

**"I seen the needle and the damage done..."**

Like the Phonogene's laughter, Martin Teatreault came to play. With five, count 'em,

turntables, some custom-built for speed, and a trusty mixing desk, the man from Quebec warms up with closed groove techniques pioneered by Pierre Schaeffer in 1948, now new sound horizons for elastoplast and peanut butter. The brightly coloured hand-painted records chug forever and ever in stuck orbits, so the time must be now for the evil cha-cha-cha.

The concert ends, the applause is good. Dazed, we shuffle to the exit, collect the gramophone dog, plod to the pod. At the Trocadero, the first anthrax bomb detonates, klaxons blare, industrial democracy gains momentum, music defected to the concrete.

**ROGER BOULDING**



Dear Editor,

What Ed Baxter doesn't know doesn't curb his bent to speculate in "The Sandpit And The Pendulum", *Resonance* Vol 4, Number 1:

1. I was never "wary of the record [*Orange Crate Art*] being left on the shelf, or of its never being released". I do not recall Mr Baxter trying to draw me into further comment on this point. If he had, I'd have responded.

2. I wasn't hired by Warner Brothers Records as a talent scout. The lyrics (from "Surf's Up"): "Are you sleeping, Brother John?" were contributed by Brian Wilson. They had nothing to do with John Kennedy or my deceased brother Ben. They had no "biblical overtones of being 'not dead but sleeping'" (sic). These errant inferences are Mr Baxter's.

3. I didn't *casually* suggest the cello in "Good Vibrations". In fact, the triplets in this pedal point became a signature part of the production. There was nothing casual about it. And it worked.

4. The synthesizer used in *Orange Crate Art* derives from economics. Synthesizer is simply one of the most cost efficient ways to demonstrate a tune. It doesn't require a studio. Any pianist will attest to the desirability of a studio with an acoustic grand — and I would have preferred one. The residual synthesizer tracks were included in the

final mix at the behest of Lenny Waronker. He was the album's executive producer. Quite frankly, I agree with him that they make a contribution.

4. "Wilson is the incarnation of this exhaustion, a figure whose real existence is ever subsumed within a vortex of expectation and frustration — as unreal as that of any movie star."

I'm not sure what Mr Baxter means to say here — *but I don't agree!*

It surely amazes me how little musicianship there is in the field of music criticism. There's a field of struggling musicians who could use supplemental income by writing musical critiques for magazines such as yours. Why you don't use them is a total mystery to me.

Recently I performed in The Hague. Mr Baxter attended, and sent this cited article in your magazine to backstage to me, an hour before I went on.

I was still seething during the performance, when I commented on my disdain for the musical press with analogy to the Pope and birth control. *If you don't play the game, you shouldn't make the rules!*

Should Mr Baxter turn his writing talents toward attempting a novel, and it is available hard-bound, I'll reconsider my evaluation of his ability as a writer.

VAN DYKE PARKS  
e-mail: geowashbrown@earthlink.net

Dear Editor,

Thank-you for sending the issues of *Resonance*. I have thoroughly enjoyed all of them, the articles are about artists that I am interested in.

I have read *Option* and *The Wire*, but unfortunately both these magazines have declined in my estimation in the last several years. It appears that both magazines are driven by their advertisers and advertising revenue.

For example, most articles in these magazines are accompanied by a full colour ad for the CD of the artist just featured on the previous pages.

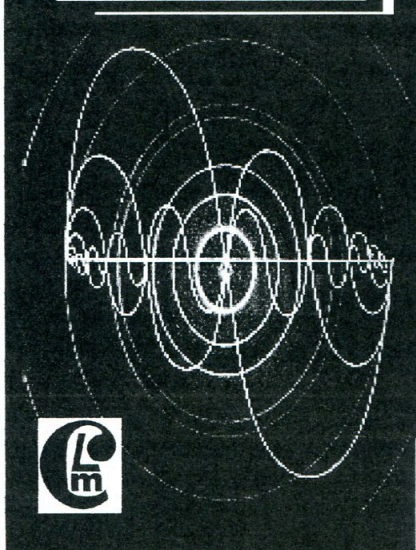
This small rant is only as an introduction to my plea to you to maintain your independence and continue with the great mandate you currently have. There must be some pressure on you to sell the magazine, increase subscription, increase profit etc, but I'm enjoying the magazine as it is. I'm afraid you will go the same way I see the *The Wire* and *Option* moving. So please stay true to your current agenda!

Thanks again for a great publication.

Regards,  
PAULA FEYERMAN  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

*RESONANCE* welcomes correspondence and relies upon the contributions of both experts and enthusiasts. Please write to *Resonance* at LMC, Unit B1, Lafone House, 11-13 Leathermarket Street, London SE1 3HN. Fax: 0171-403-1880.

## RESONANCE



### Among this issue's contributors:

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**Ben Watson** is author of a major study of Frank Zappa and a critic for many magazines.

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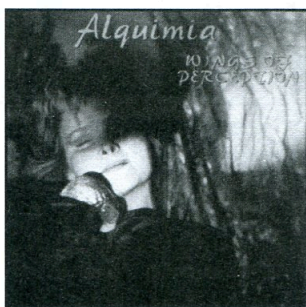
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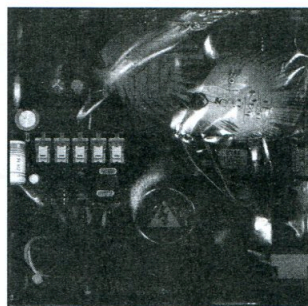
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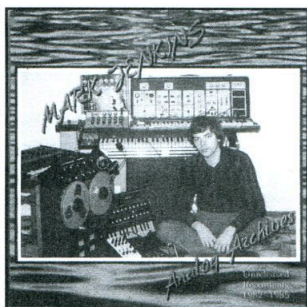
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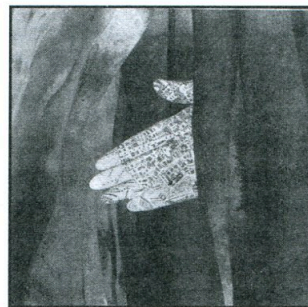


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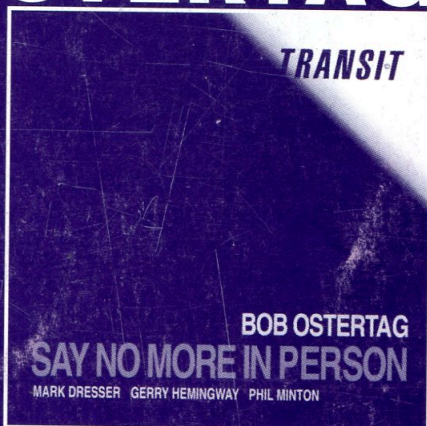
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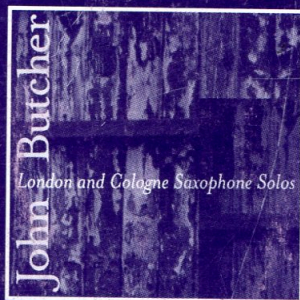


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